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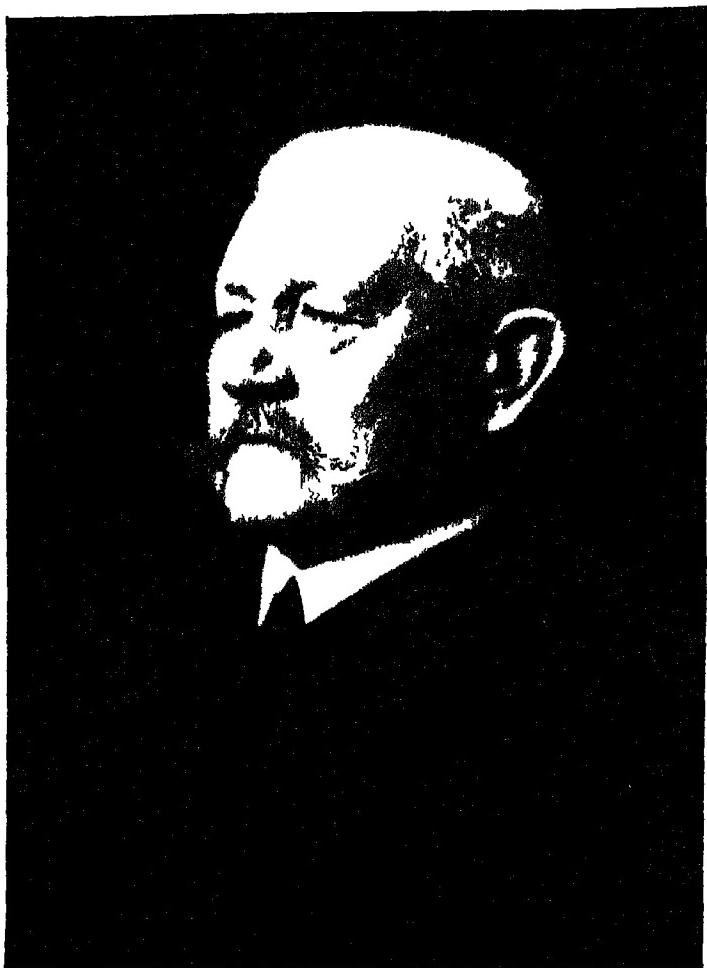
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**HINDENBURG**





HINDENBURG TN 1930

# HINDENBURG

*PEACE · WAR · AFTERMATH*

*By*

GERHARD SCHULTZE-PFAELZER

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MCMXXXVI

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## PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

FOR sixteen years the figure of Paul von Hindenburg has been in the foreground of German events. During that time many books have been written about his person and his deeds ; but these works deal only with the earlier periods of his career and, being mostly adulatory, offer the reader little that is not already known. The present volume is the first which depicts the German leader, in war and peace, not as an ideal figure or superman, but as a far-seeing hard-working statesman animated solely by a sense of duty. Without indulging in dithyrambs, without any picturesque glorification of his subject, the Author depicts the stark personality of the man, his character and his reactions to the rapidly changing forces which have borne him along the stream of political life.

It is said that the art of biography is to show not what a man did, nor what he said, but what he *was* ; and this maxim Dr. Schultze-Praelzer has kept to the forefront of his mind throughout the writing of his book. It is, in fact, a careful historical and political study, by an exceptionally able witness, of the personality of the greatest figure in Germany to-day. Using the sequence of political events as a background, the Author paints vividly the process by which the Field Marshal developed into the President of the Reich.

The book should prove of importance not only to those who are interested in reading the lives of great men but to the many who would know the inner history of the domestic

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and international difficulties which have confronted Germany since 1918. For it sheds much light upon the complicated problems of German policy and German opinion, a knowledge of which is essential to the understanding of the problems that must be cleared up if the world is to be at peace.

*September, 1931.*

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## CHAPTER I

### THE BIRTH OF A FAMILY

EASTWARDS the course of Empire lies. . . .

Beyond the Elbe lay the coveted open spaces : the fertile plains, extending for hundreds and thousands of miles where the heathen were at home. The river forming the boundary could be easily forded by horse and foot in summer time, but when winter broke up, pack-ice and swirling eddies called an only too effective halt to the advance of Christianity. Nevertheless many a Christian stronghold had already arisen amid the countless tribes of untamed savages.

It was by Charlemagne himself, the founder of Central Europe, who had extended the holy frontier marches beyond the Weser, that the heroes of the Roman-Germanic cross were assigned their difficult but lucrative mission. From the mountain slopes and wooded valleys of Saxony the feudal array of the Ottos gradually pushed forward beyond the right bank of the Elbe where the promised land awaited them.

As a progressive knight of the goosequill remarked a thousand years later, the tendency of East Elbian junkers even then was to move to the right—a witty definition of their age-long destiny.

The two-edged swords bit deeply into the heathen sinners. Such of the natives who survived were converted to the Triune God and submitted to the spiritual and

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secular overlords who had been sent them by their Redeemer Jesus Christ. These warriors in jerkins and cowls, tyrants though they were, did their best to teach morality and spread the blessings of civilisation. The Crusaders who had returned from their pilgrimage to the sources of Christianity now sought their Canaan in the barbarous North-east. Ceaselessly they advanced beyond the Oder and the Vistula until they watered their steeds in the Prussian Pregel, and the Ave Maria sounded on the shores of the Baltic. It was the Elbe valley where the harness was forged and the crucifixes carved which served as a base to this far-flung German expedition. It was there that Magdeburg, half-fortress half-monastery, majestically raised its head. It was there that beat the heart of the new Colonial Empire which sent out its life-blood to its farthest extremities. The Altmark, the Neumark and the valley of the Vistula were the power-stations of this Eastern Chivalry.

Magdeburg was only a day's ride distant from the Salzwedel district of the Altmark. It was here that a group of noble families had pitched their camp: Benkendorpe or Benekendorp was their name, a patronymic of doubtful origin which was gradually to become well known as German civilisation advanced. Members of knightly orders, landowners, a chancellor, a lord chamberlain, country squires, military chiefs, counsellors, officers, such were the parts played by successive generations. Faithful to their motto, "Ich Dien," the lords of the country were to serve many masters.

Their estates grew and were lost again, for their blood was shed upon many a battlefield. Many branches of the family died out, while others shot up anew. The latter likewise emigrated from the Altmark through the Neumark to the valley of the Vistula, where eight hundred

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years after its modest beginnings at Salzwedel a warrior of this house, which in the meantime had formed an alliance with the family of Hindenburg of kindred destiny, was to make its name famous in the world's history.

The first documentary evidence we possess of the existence of the Beneckendorffs dates from the year 1280 A.D., when Johannes de Benekendorpe appeared as a witness to a contract of purchase between a compeer of his, Werner von den Schulenburg, and the Franciscan monks of Salzwedel, a document drawn up in quaint dog Latin, which the knightly executors were probably as incapable of reading as they were of signing.

It is only in modern times that their faded marks have been discovered in ancient archives. We therefore owe the first record of their existence to the hand of a literate stranger. The why and wherefore of their individual lives are hidden from us, but there can be no doubt that their fate was influenced by the central event of their times, which tradition has so fully recorded for us, and that the Beneckendorps arrived in the Altmark in the train of the Ascanian Margrave Albrecht.

Just before Luther's message reached the North the last of the Benkendorffs of the Altmark took holy orders, and with him the family disappeared from its original historical place of settlement. In the meantime, however, it had long since struck fresh roots in the Neumark. The family had accompanied the Ascanians when they advanced beyond the Oder, and had acquired estates near Arnswalde, where they ruled the peasant immigrants who had colonised the country. Some of their descendants settled down and founded fresh branches of this knightly family. Others remained celibate and entered the service of the Teutonic Order which shortly afterwards subdued the Neumark.

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The Emperor was far away and weak to boot, and the new Teutonic Order had to rely upon its own resources. The Beneckendorps were amongst those who marched with the Knights of the Cross to the hills of the Samland, where a town was christened Königsberg in memory of Ottokar, King of Bohemia, and to Marienburg, now famous for its red-brick Gothic cathedral. In those sanguinary times even the most peaceably inclined were compelled to bear the sword. The nobility of the Neumark suffered their worst disaster at Tannenberg, where nearly five hundred years later a Beneckendorff was to earn a warlike renown unparalleled in the history of Eastern Germany.

Under the rule of the Order the Neumark gradually developed until it became the main source of the prosperity of Eastern Germany. The Slavonic counter-offensive, however, was about to begin. The mediaeval Church had begun to decay. Princes were obtaining sovereign authority in their hereditary states. The second Hohenzollern of Brandenburg acquired the Neumark, and with it the obligations in the East entailed by its possession. The Red Eagle of the Elbe and the Spree stretched out its claws towards the black and white Prussian banner. The noble houses of the Neumark paid homage to their sovereign in Berlin, and the Beneckendorffs by that time were among the leading families of their district. They had become related by marriage to many a noble house of Pomerania, and marriages and the consequent division of inheritance had speedily led to an exchange of seignorial property between the various branches of the family. Although resident owners, they were not so firmly attached to their as yet undiminished estates as was subsequently to be the case. Many of them still strayed far afield in search of war and its adventures, or entered the service of some alien but contentious lord.

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One of the many Beneckendorffs who took to soldiering and farming played a part in high politics as Chancellor to three Electors ; it was he who during the Thirty Years' War tried to persuade the vacillating George William to abandon his useless neutrality and endeavoured to combine the North German Sovereigns of the Evangelical Confession into a powerful alliance. The Beneckendorffs, like their neighbours, had long since become thorough-going Protestants, and looked upon the Catholic Empire as their enemy during the wars of religion. It was during the schism between North and South that a Beneckendorff for the first time appeared as a prominent actor on the historical stage.

Members of the family are occasionally met with who were not supporters of the cause of Brandenburg-Prussia. Such, for instance, was Ernest von Beneckendorff, the son of the Lord Chamberlain of the Hohenzollerns, who was born at Ansbach in the year 1711. This young man, after studying at Jena, presented himself at the seignorial court of Rudolstadt, and subsequently was given a commission in the Electoral Garde du Corps, in which capacity he took part in the fighting against Frederick the Great. He seems to have conducted himself very creditably at the battle of Kolin, his account of which has come down to us.

" I took the household squadron, attacked the advancing cavalry and threw them into confusion ; others came up behind them, but by the Grace of God we dispersed them and drove them back in the utmost disorder to the inn on the main road where the King was, and thereby paved the way to the victory which so happily ensued. Our other two regiments came up at full gallop and charged the infantry, and the latter knowing that we were in the rear of them evacuated the field of battle, whereupon the whole of the enemy's left wing retired as best it could in confusion,

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leaving behind it its artillery, many trophies, and a number of prisoners."

The passage in question is taken from the memoirs bequeathed to us by this anti-Prussian hero entitled *A True Account of my Life and Military Service*. He was the first of his house to write the story of his proud career. Although he was an Imperialist, the majority of his cousins in the North took sides with Frederick.

Owing to the tribute of blood paid by it to its kings, the house of Beneckendorff in the Neumark gradually died out. It was only its last and least vigorous representatives who stayed at home. Hans Joachim von Beneckendorff, a man "of permanently enfeebled constitution," espoused Scholastika von Hindenburg, the daughter of another house of the Neumark, whose ancestral castle of Quedlinburg had been destroyed during the Peasant Wars. The various ramifications of the Hindenburgs, which had formerly existed in Central Germany and Austria, after taking part in the Crusades and Eastern forays had migrated from the Altmark into the Neumark, where they finally settled down.

The brother of Scholastika von Hindenburg held a commission in the Prussian army and took part in the Silesian wars. As he was riding beside King Frederick his leg was shattered by a cannon ball. The King bestowed upon the deserving veteran the estates of Limbsee and Neudeck in the district of Rosenberg in Old Prussia.

It was here that the von Beneckendorffs and the von Hindenburgs were to find a common home for the next two hundred years. As the head of the house of Limbsee-Neudeck humbly wrote in his Bible as a farewell message on his deathbed in 1772: "I am not worthy, Lord, of the mercy and goodness Thou has shown thy servant. I crossed the Vistula with my staff in my hand and now I

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am owner of two estates. What am I or my house, Lord, that Thou shouldst have brought me hither ? ”

Major-General von Beneckendorff, the son of the last of the Beneckendorffs of the Neumark and of Scholastika who died in 1782, settled down in East Prussia on a property which he had purchased in the district of Heiligenbeil. The next generation of the Beneckendorffs of East Prussia became related by marriage with the Eulenburgs of Prassen, another noble house of East Prussia. The young Beneckendorff in question inherited from his great-uncle von Hindenburg, the brother of Scholastika and honoured veteran of the wars of “ Old Fritz,” the estates of Limbsee and Neudeck, which had been conferred upon the latter by his sovereign.

This Johann Otto Gottfried von Beneckendorff, who was to hand down not only the landed property, but also the “ name and arms of the noble family of Hindenburg ” to his Prussian and German descendants, had served in the regiment of Larisch. An ancient portrait still exists, in which he is depicted as a light-haired, blue-eyed, slender youth, wearing a dark cuirass. The gold embroidery of his laced coat, the distinctive badge of the regiment of Larisch, has been retained in the general’s tunic of modern times, which his great-grandson was one day destined to wear.

The passion for war and the love of peace were curiously combined in many of the representatives of this now rejuvenated family. In war, it is true, glory and perhaps influence were to be gained ; but what if it led to the extirpation of the family ? The landowner only fought if his home were menaced, whereas the nobleman, in accordance with the formal code of his estate, was bound to pursue the calling of a soldier. But the age of knightly brawlings, the pursuit of so dangerous and savage a trade

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from sheer love of it, was becoming a thing of the past ; the time had come to serve one's household gods, keep order and increase the general prosperity. Master Johann Otto Gottfried accordingly laid aside his cuirass and got himself appointed county councillor of his district. His one desire was to bring up his two sons, who in accordance with tradition were subalterns in the Prussian army, as pious and honourable administrators of their estates.

The younger of the two, however, who in his mind's eye at no distant date was to become the owner of Neudeck, seemed, for the time being at any rate, to have been a bit of a madcap. A letter from the father to the son in the latter's garrison town on the subject of duelling reveals the views of the master of Limbsee in no uncertain light. It runs as follows :

" My DEAR SON,

I duly received your last letter which was undated (I presume however it was written on the 15th) and am sincerely thankful for your happy escape which I most heartily longed for. I deeply regret however, my dear boy, that you should have been unfaithful to the resolve you made at home and have actually fought a duel. It is pretty clear to me that you were encouraged by your brother officers to do so, and to that extent I am honestly inclined to excuse you, but, my dear boy, the more carefully I investigate the matter the less I am able to do so, and the more I find you to be responsible ; I will therefore take the liberty of discussing the question quite sincerely and paternally with you. Herr v. S., who by your account behaved badly to you, (I won't go into that point), very probably regretted his action, for he came to see you with a view to explaining his conduct or to regaining your friendship. His action, my dear boy, should have been the best sort of public satisfaction you could have obtained and have brought you to your senses . . . but as you failed in this respect, and you were being encouraged, there was nothing for you but to fight. I won't say anything about duelling itself, but I could wish there was more generosity about it ; anger, that bitter root and cause of our undoing, was never the source of anything great or noble."

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A letter which, from the point of view of the sentiments expressed therein, might well have been written by the author's great-grandson, Field-Marshal Paul von Hindenburg.

Otto Ludwig, the duellist of 1799, turned over a new leaf, abandoned the rough life of a soldier, and went home to reside upon the hereditary estates which the family had acquired within the last few decades.

The fate of the families was fixed more firmly if possible by the similarity of the lot of successive generations. While the military ideal was maintained by a long line of soldiers who served their king and country, the resident landowners fostered the prosperity of the countryside and provided a home for the family at large. The dispersion of the latter in consequence of chance adventures and the vicissitudes of history had become a thing of the past.

The evolution of the Beneckendorffs and Hindenburghs in the later stages of their history affords a typical example of the peculiar conditions under which the colonising nobility of Prussia and the Marches developed, which differed very perceptibly and in remarkable fashion from those which fate had assigned to the aristocracy of the rest of Europe. Of course, they conformed to the common ethical code of their peers, the main features of which were more or less identical in every country from Spain to Russia. But the German landed and warlike aristocracy beyond the Elbe had discharged a duty which corresponded with the aims and institutions of Western Europe only in its virtual impulse and not in the methods which its execution entailed.

Owing to the colonising mission which had been imposed upon them they were denied the luxuries, the freedom from anxiety and the opportunities of rising in the social scale enjoyed by their knightly contemporaries in other

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lands. The land they conquered was less fertile than had been originally assumed, and was off the beaten track of continental intercourse ; indeed it was long considered the extremity of the Continent. Civilisation at first took no root in these new lands and had to be imported. Moreover, as their title to possession was continually challenged, they never for one instant could afford to relax their vigilance.

They fought, prayed and worked : literary culture was an unjustifiable luxury. The compulsion to work was too imperative to allow of any dilettantism, and any impulse to cultivate poetry or to gratify the passions was sternly repressed. Military expeditions proved unprofitable, and those who went out into the wide world in search of gain returned with a good enough opinion of themselves, but disappointed at heart and as a rule with but little to show for it, or were assimilated by an alien race and failed to retain their individuality. The best of them lived a life of self-denial, absorbed in the management of their estates at home under conditions which tended to produce leaders of men ; leaders, however, in most cases without followers.

Meanwhile the Spaniards had been reaping a golden harvest in South and Central America, and a colonial aristocracy of British descent had grown rich upon its plantations in Virginia. Austrian and Italian lords had laid hands upon the superabundant wealth of the ancient lands around the Mediterranean, and the French seigneurs had come to regard the land on both sides of the Rhine as their domain and had acquired influence and a privileged position as pioneers of the art of living.

The noble families of Prussia and the Marches on the other hand had either never risen beyond the status of big farmers, or else were performing their duties as badly-paid officials in out-of-the-way towns of their provinces. Even those who entered the service of their prince rarely rose

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beyond the rank of captain or colonel. The armies were commanded by soldierly adventurers or parvenus such as Wallenstein or Derfflinger or by princes of the blood. It was not until the beginning of the eighteenth century, when standing armies gradually became a permanent institution, that the pre-eminent qualifications as officers of the junkers of the Eastern Marches were finally recognised and that a noble landowner appeared on the scene as a Prussian field-marshall.

Frederick the Great, who had nothing in common with the nobility of the north-eastern corner of his kingdom, was the first to detect and prove the worth of these landed gentry : they became the backbone of his corps of officers and subsequently a model for the rest of Europe to imitate. He conferred donations and distinctions upon this race of landlords and commanding officers in order to increase its prestige and influence. The Bonaekendorffs and Hindenburgs, as we have stated, were amongst those to whom he gave a permanent residence, thereby strengthening the ties between them and their sovereign and their country.

These Prussian officers, besides being the military *élite* of Europe, rose considerably in the social scale. Manor-houses took the place of the old farm-dwellings. Their owners hired artists to paint them, and became ardent collectors of furniture and books. Some branches of families like the Bülow and Kleists developed such a love of learning and the beautiful that they actually produced great thinkers and artists, whose existence in alien surroundings in consequence of the lack of understanding they encountered among their equals was often a very wretched one.

To tell the truth, the East Elbian aristocracy at its best never attained a very high intellectual level, nor betrayed any tendency to originality of thought. Scharnhorst, who was to renovate the Prussian army materially as well as

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spiritually, was a West German who looked westwards, to Carnot and Napoleon, for the sources of his inspiration. Their victories in the Wars of Liberation were due rather to their spirit of discipline and self-sacrifice than to any display of generalship. These East German noblemen, there is no denying it, were no divinely inspired race.

On the other hand, however, they were exempt from the defects and weaknesses of genius. It was by their exemplary strictness and modesty that they disciplined the lower orders. They never yielded to the temptations of the gospel of enlightenment and romance which proclaimed the supremacy of the individual *ego*. Their piety, which was free from any trace of bigotry, resembled that of the early Christians. Their religion was neither mystical nor formal in its nature, but sheer spiritual concentration, and reflected the healthy, even pulse of their blood as it coursed through their veins. They were absolutely devoid of that pride which was the undoing of the Austrian nobility.

Differences of rank within their own class had never been recognised : and one would have sought in vain for greater families amongst them. None of the Eastern families, except that of the Hohenzollerns, ever attained princely dignity.

Thus they really created a society in which merit alone gave a title to distinction. Even as late as the fifties of the last century the East Elbian families were utterly unlike the conception that liberal polemists had formed of them. Their conscience in social questions was robust but honest. Hardly any discontent existed on the East Prussian estates. The attitude of these little, self-reliant autocrats and patriarchs towards their menials was remarkably democratic in its way. No feelings of social exclusiveness acted as a barrier between them and the moving current of the life around them ; the patrician neighbour-

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liness which distinguished them had nothing in common with the ostentatious and often disdainful bounteousness which gradually became the fashion in town life. They preserved contact with the masses to a much greater extent than the third Estate which had migrated thither from the West. These nobles had associated with the man of the people on the farm and on the barrack square, and knew him much better than the bourgeois who, in North Germany especially, were so impressed by the particle. The North German nobility had never been any the worse for the introduction of new strains of blood, and marriages with the bourgeoisie were no longer the exception. It is a remarkable fact that the two most famous representatives of this aristocratic guild of the north, Otto von Bismarck and Paul von Hindenburg, were of bourgeois descent on their mother's side.

It was only at a very late stage, in fact subsequently to the Wars of Liberation, that the indigenous nobility of East Germany began to play a great part in the affairs of State. Statecraft hitherto had been the affair of the dynasties, and the earlier Prussian monarchs had been more inclined to choose foreign experts as their advisers in matters of "state and erudition" than their own gentry. Court appointments and commissions in the army had been reserved for the latter, but the tasks of diplomacy and administration had usually been entrusted to highly-connected cosmopolitan noblemen of proved ability, to free-lance specialists from abroad, if not to ecclesiastical dignitaries.

In previous centuries, indeed, the nobles of the Eastern Marches, unlike their compeers in England, France and Austria, had only on the rarest occasions taken part in civil affairs. War and agriculture at first had been their sole occupations. Later on, it is true, they accepted impor-

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tant judicial, and subsequently administrative, posts : for a long time previously, however, they had never aspired to anything beyond local administrative distinction. Politics in their mind meant turmoil ; armchair philosophers and men of learning were there to deal with matters concerning the central Government. The political reforms which the West German Baron von Stein introduced into Prussia were considered by them to be of a revolutionary nature, and as tending to undermine the conditions brought about by war and colonisation. Was it permissible, they asked, to deprive them of the preponderance which had only lately and with infinite difficulty been established in East Prussia ? Politics in the modern popular sense of the word they looked upon as dangerous in general and to themselves in particular.

Although during the nineteenth century the landowners suddenly began to take part in these new-fangled politics and the central administration, which by then had become politicised, as deputies and officials, they did so chiefly in self-defence, and when after 1815 they conquered the Prussian State and became one of the chief factors in the State, which they governed alongside of and with, and occasionally indeed in defiance of, the King, it was with the utmost reluctance that they did so. They managed, however, in this capacity, very much to their own advantage, to delay considerably the advent of democracy. Incidentally they developed such a magnificent administrative practice that Prussia under their guidance became one of the best governed states of Europe, the framework of which, however, was too rigid to be capable of offering a prolonged resistance to the advance of progress. The Prussian nobility, indeed, produced the founder of the Empire.

After this short but brilliant period of political achieve-

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ment their ministerial capacity became exhausted ; and apart from supplying their country with a number of invertebrate diplomatists they relapsed once more into political torpor. Their magnificent tradition as soldiers, however, was fully maintained. The martial spirit was their biological inheritance, the noblest traditions of which are summed up in the name of Hindenburg.

## CHAPTER II

### HOME AND CHILDHOOD

THE advent of the nineteenth century inaugurated a new epoch of violent change in Europe. It seemed as if the destruction of the old order and the diffusion of general happiness could only be achieved amid the hurricane of war. Lightning and the storm-clouds in the west portended the advent of Napoleon.

Would even the east, the land between the Oder and the limitless steppes of Russia, be threatened by this fresh surge of popular fury ?

While the contending hosts were still fighting on the Rhine, in Lombardy, in the Alps, on the Danube, all was calm and peaceful in the east. The monarchs of Russia, Austria and Prussia had just outlined their frontiers in accordance with their dynastic aspirations. Warsaw had become Prussian, and the kingdom of Frederick was glutted with subjects of Polish nationality. The Black Eagle, the heir of the Black Cross of the Knights, had apparently triumphed once for all over its Slavonic neighbour after five hundred years of contention.

The new territory acquired by the Hohenzollern, although never Germanised, became thoroughly Prussianised. The Prussian lords, whose families for generations past had looked upon colonisation as their inevitable duty, now acquired fresh possessions and influence. The sons of the noble houses of the eastern marches left

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the army and devoted themselves to the exploitation of their possessions. Shortly before the turn of the century unmistakable signs of prosperity became noticeable in East Prussia. The extension of the area under cultivation, the enforced pacification of the unruly Poles, the industrial skill of the German bourgeoisie and the increased demand for food of the towns in the west all contributed to the progress and the development of the basin of the Vistula where tradition had so long reigned supreme.

The von Beneckendorffs and von Hindenburgs, like so many of their neighbours, now expanded beyond the limits of the hereditary estates which Johann Otto Gottfried, the head of the two houses, had acquired as a home for his family. Otto Ludwig, the younger son, laid aside his uniform of the von Langen regiment in 1801 and devoted himself to agriculture, the profits of which were increasing. He built himself a manor-house and laid out a park with terraces at Neudeck, which had been made over to him by his father. Numerous cattle, grazing land and well-tilled cornfields bore witness to his prosperity.

A wing in the meantime had been added to the new house, which was getting too small, and in the course of a few years Neudeck grew into a country seat.

Fourteen children were born of the marriage between its owner and his Polish bride, Eleonore von Brederlow, the younger of whom, alas! were to see the light of day under very altered circumstances.

The east was destined soon to bid farewell to its idyllic peace, for the Corsican incendiary had once more let loose the dogs of war. The conqueror's army crossed the Vistula into defenceless Prussia, which now became the scene of hostilities. The Russians came to the help of their Prussian allies, and they and the French alternately

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relieved one another at Neudeck. One of their encounters took place on the river Passarge not far away.

Belligerent armies, whether friend or foe, are a curse to the country dweller, to whom they mean billetings, fines, empty stables and ruined crops. The exhausted land suffered severely at the hands of its French conquerors. Otto Ludwig von Hindenburg was the county councillor of the district, and fulfilled his responsible duties at great personal self-sacrifice. If better terms were unobtainable for the inhabitants, he at least saw that their burdens were evenly distributed. During his frequent journeys between headquarters, the seat of the provincial administration, and his own district his wife and children had often to be left at home alone and unprotected.

The Castle of Finckenstein, where Napoleon resided and where he spent his honeymoon with the lovely and gentle Polish Countess Walewska, was at no great distance from Neudeck. But the romance of his new love did not incline him to indulgence, and County Councillor von Hindenburg was rudely repelled when he came to plead for better treatment. Eventually the enemy evacuated the country, but even then their troubles were by no means at an end.

In April 1812 the Grand Army assembled preparatory to the campaign against Russia, and the French returned with the Prussians as vassals in their train, and when next year the residue of this mighty army straggled back the Russians arrived in pursuit of them.

In 1807 Otto Ludwig's elder brother had left the army in disgust at its subservience to the French and settled down at Limbsee, the principal family seat of the Hindenburgs. Johann Heinrich, for so he was called, joined the popular uprising in 1813, fought bravely in the Wars of Liberation, and ended his career as governor of the frontier fortress of Thorn.

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Thus both brothers were engaged in keeping their watch on the Vistula at the close of the Napoleonic Wars, the elder as governor of a fortress and the younger, subsequently to 1816, as provincial governor of the district, in which capacity as the friend of von Schön, the Lord-Lieutenant and disciple of Stein who contributed so much to the recovery of the province, he was able to render valuable services in the task of reconstruction.

It was to the circumspect, honest and unselfish master of Neudeck that the inhabitants turned whenever, as was often the case, they were in need of advice and assistance, for the distress was still severe, and was to become even more acute in spite of the return of liberty.

Otto Ludwig, alas! was more successful in saving the encumbered estates of his friends from alienation than his own; for he was compelled to sell his ancestral home of Limbsee after his father's death.

Robert von Hindenburg, the youngest of his fourteen children and the father of the Field-Marshal, was born in 1816. The post-war generation at Neudeck grew up amid very Spartan conditions. Self-denial was practised by the junkers of Old Prussia in those days as a matter of course. What ready money they had was used to pay off the encumbrances on their estates, from which alone they derived the means of subsistence.

The wool of which their clothes were made was spun and woven at home. Little Robert was very anxious to wear a suit made of black cloth from the mills at his confirmation, but he had to save up for years in order to get it. There was no lack, it is true, in other respects; they had a pony and some old fowling-pieces, hay-carts to romp in and old plum-trees to climb. They were no weaklings these young lords of the manor; one of them had hardly got over a broken arm when he came to his

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mother with the announcement that he had just broken the other.

Their father, Otto Ludwig, like so many of his forebears, lived to a ripe old age, and when his numerous children and grandchildren assembled to celebrate his eightieth birthday half the century had elapsed, Prussia had got over her revolution and had just been granted a constitution.

A splendid old fellow he must have been, this county alderman and head of the House of Hindenburg, grandfather of the lad who eighty years later was to be not only the head of his house, but of Germany also. In a picture in the ancestral gallery at Neudeck he is portrayed with delicate features, a good-natured expression, and sloping shoulders. The fine lines of the head have not been passed on to his descendants. The harsh outlines which were to be so characteristic of the next generation of the Hindenburgs were obviously inherited from his wife, whose deep-set eyes are encompassed by angular frontal and jaw bones and by big, firm cheeks. The heavy build and phlegmatic nature which distinguished later generations of this family first became noticeable during their intimate connection with East Prussia.

Little Robert, the last of fourteen, was a shy and lonely-natured boy. During his schooldays at Königsberg he seems to have lived a solitary existence as a boarder at the Gröben institute and never to have taken any part in the larks of his playfellows. He inherited from his father a benevolent disposition, which he transmitted in his turn to his great son. Nothing gave him so much pleasure, even in his childhood, as to make people happy or to give presents to his friends.

At the early age of sixteen he joined the 1st Posen regiment of infantry. This province, which formed a connecting link between North-east and South-east Prussia, had been regained at the Congress of Vienna, and it was in

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its capital, which was destined for long years to be a second home to him, that he finally settled down.

Owing to the resentful attitude of the citizens, the majority of whom were patriotic Poles, the relations between the families of the Prussian officers and administrators became very intimate. The first great Polish insurrection against Prussia and Russia, which broke out in 1831, had been suppressed before young Robert donned his uniform. Fugitives from Russian Poland and the Province of Posen were a familiar sight to him, however, at his home during the holidays. These homeless folk gave no trouble at Neudeck. A young Polish volunteer, to whom his parents had extended hospitality, allowed the half-grown lad to accompany him in his rides. This son of liberty from beyond the frontier did not always meet with the approval of his mother, but her doubts were dispelled by his assurance that "the morals of the Good Lady terrify me more than any artillery."

The relations between the two nations in the Province of Posen in the thirties and forties became more and more strained. In this heyday of European liberalism the unpopularity of the military monarchies was on the increase, and Poland regarded the situation as anything but desperate.

The Prussian Conservatives, like some colonial ruling caste, kept very much to themselves, not from any trait of tyrannical haughtiness, but owing to the mistrust they felt, a mistrust that was justified by their experience and the circumstances. In consequence the intercourse between the various ranks of German society was much closer than in Old Prussia. Bourgeoisie and nobility, officers and the learned classes considered themselves as members of one and the same great family, and associated in the common task of carrying out the political mission of the kingdom of Prussia.

Robert von Hindenburg himself was connected by family

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ties with Posen, for his eldest sister had married the director of the provincial board of health. This married couple, with whom he lived, had rented a huge patrician dwelling from an old army doctor called Mönnig, which became the scene of many social gatherings of the Prussian gentry, who were united by their common recollection of the Wars of Liberation of 1813-15.

The daughters of the Mönnigs and their husbands were among those who frequented the house ; one of them had married Surgeon-General Schwickart, who had served as army doctor in the 'Great Wars' of that generation. Herr Schwickart had been awarded the Iron Cross at Kulm for leading back into the firing line a company that had lost its officers. The Geneva Convention was non-existent in those days, and those who tended the wounded were not considered as non-combatants.

Schwickart, who looked very well in the brilliant uniform of a surgeon-general, had now become one of the dignitaries of Posen. Such a leading part did he play among the German section of the population that his portrait was painted for the Municipality and hung in the Council Chamber. He married presently into the Mönnig family, and not long after a little girl could be seen at play on the garden slopes of the Mönnig's house where Ensign Robert von Hindenburg was very soon to lodge with his brother-in-law. The intimacy between the two families was to give rise to another love affair, and ultimately another alliance, for Robert, who in the meantime had been promoted second-lieutenant, proposed to the daughter of the Schwickarts who had grown up with him, and was accepted by her.

His engagement to a member of his family circle, with whom he had grown up and whom he had long since intended as his bride, was in keeping with the best patriarchal traditions.

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Lieutenant Robert von Hindenburg's duties in the casemates of the fortress allowed him plenty of time to indulge in the fashionable sentimentalism of those days, from which even Prussian officers were not exempt. He translated his feelings into verse : " I stood thoughtfully and alone in the glory of the sinking sun on the steep heights of Fort Winiary and gazed sadly into the valley " were the opening lines of one of his poems.

One event particularly affected him. " The sullen roll of the drum," he wrote, " on the parade ground entered into my soul. I asked what it meant and found to my horror that the king was dead."

King Frederick William III, whose monarchical prestige had been magnified by his victories over Napoleon, died in 1840. His officers, to whom the war after so many years of peace was a glorious historical recollection, mourned the hero who had so little of the hero about him. The throne of Prussia stood to them for all that was most sacred, and together with God and family formed a trinity which filled their existence. To hold political opinions which were frowned upon by the king was accounted an act of rebellious presumption.

It was in 1845 that Lieutenant von Hindenburg married the friend of his youth and thus fulfilled his ideals. The young couple were soon blessed with numerous offspring. The children, as we might expect, were brought up as good Christians, and the sons, moreover, to be loyal and good soldiers of their king.

Soon his friends and acquaintances were rejoiced by reading the following announcement in the *Posener Zeitung*: " I have the honour to announce the birth to my dear wife Louise née Schwickart of a vigorous and healthy boy. Posen, 2nd October, 1847. Beneckendorff von Hindenburg. Second-Lieutenant and Adjutant."

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The child was christened Paul Ludwig Hans Anton. The first year of his life was not one of undisturbed peace at home. The revolution broke out again in the west, and spread from Paris across the Rhine to Berlin and thence to the east. The Poles rose again, and rioting took place in Posen. The first onslaught of the Poles was repulsed with heavy losses by the guard at the drawbridges. Shortly afterwards, however, the garrison marched away, and with them Second-Lieutenant von Hindenburg, in order to seek out the insurgents and defeat them in the open field.

The Poles took possession of the capital. Orders were given for a general illumination in celebration of the entry of their leader Miroslawsky, and Hindenburg's mother, who had been left behind with her child, was compelled to light up the front windows of her house. As his mother rocked little Paul to sleep to the exultant shouts of the rebels outside, she suddenly remembered that it was the 22nd of March and the birthday of the Prince of Prussia, the heir to the throne.

When order had been restored his father was transferred to Cologne on the Rhine, another centre of revolution at the other extremity of the kingdom, where Karl Marx had unfolded his banner, and the Prussian troops had been reinforced with a view to overawing the insurgent element among the working classes. The son of the officer of those days was destined eighty years later as President of the Reich to invite the political heirs of this new movement to assume the reins of government.

The architectural marvels of Cologne cathedral, then still awaiting completion in accordance with the plans of the romantic and mediævally-minded King Frederick William IV, are among the President's earliest recollections, the only ones he retains of his short stay in the west. Soon the family returned to the east, first to Graudenz, then to

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Pinne, a small country town in the Province of Posen. Visits to the grandparents at Neudeck and Posen were a welcome interruption to the even tenor of the children's lives. One of the gardeners of the Mönnig great-grandparents had served as a drummer boy under Frederick the Great. The old man and the boy who received his first riding lessons from him linked up three centuries.

His father as supernumerary captain commanded a company of the Landwehr at Pinne in accordance with the military customs of the time. Captain von Hindenburg's leisure was not unduly absorbed by his duties, and he had plenty of spare time to devote to his family. Paul in the meantime had acquired brothers and sisters, and when the childless but kindly old Frau von Rappard invited them out to her estates near Pinne it was a red-letter day for the family. For there they found, not in a stable, as you might imagine, but in the play-chest, a big black billy goat whose bleating transported the youngsters with joy. They simply could not tear themselves away from this marvellous toy, which accompanied them home and was only returned when the children had gone to bed.

Their parents gave them their first lessons in French and geography, the only subjects which, in accordance with the custom prevalent among the military nobility, were then considered the essentials preliminary to a military education. Their first rudiments of military education, however, were imparted to them by their nurse, whose harsh order, "Silence in the Ranks!" never failed to reduce her squalling charges to silence. She had been a *vivandière* and had retained from her earlier profession not only a pronounced weakness for strong drink, but a propensity to military objurgations of such coarseness that her services as a pedagogue had soon to be dispensed with.

Robert von Hindenburg wrote to his parents at Neudeck

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at Christmas 1853 enclosing his six-year-old son's first military exercises : "Our Christmas presents this year," he characteristically added, "will be on a very small scale in view of the general rise in prices and of the duty of the more fortunate members of the community to look after the poor." Their mother, on the other hand, was concerned rather to re-assure their grandfather. "You may be certain that we shall always strive to do our duty faithfully by our children and render ourselves worthy of your affection." Assurances of this kind are couched nowadays in less stilted language ; life, however, has not become any cheaper.

Shortly afterwards their father was transferred again, this time to Glogau in Silesia, where the family occupied an old official building with massive walls, and loopholes for windows, the lofts and wooden galleries, the secret rooms and up-and-down staircases of which were a fine playground for the boys. The 'Custodie,' as the garrison prison was called, was only separated by a wall from their backyard—on one occasion the children were terrified by a rumour that a prisoner had been beheaded, on another by the appearance of a blood-red comet in the sky which was said to portend war. War, indeed, was the subject of almost daily conversation, for the fate of so many of their relations had been affected by it, and they themselves, too, were soon to realise its meaning.

For the present, however, life in Glogau was peaceful enough. One day Paul was given a silver groschen of 12 pfennigs, which he expended in the following manner : six pfennigs on candied orange peel for his grandmother, who told such exciting stories about the wars with the French and the Russians, three pfennigs on chocolate cigars for his brother, and the same amount on an india-rubber ball for his sister. He himself, it will be noticed, got

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nothing. It was an honest and unpretentious age. Paul attended at first the Evangelical town school near the Church of the Bark of Christ round the corner not far from his home, and subsequently the Royal High School, where he began in the sixth class, but was promoted a year later to the fifth.

The time had arrived, however, for him to say goodbye to the civilian school and to enter the cadet school. His report on leaving the high school was only a fair one ; as regards his general behaviour we are told that "At first he was very industrious, but has latterly somewhat relaxed his efforts. His conduct apart from a tendency to be a chatterbox was good." The latter allusion seems somewhat comical in view of his dislike in later years to otiose conversation of any kind, and proves how little value is to be attached to estimates formed at school of the character of an individual.

The conscientiousness of the lad is evinced, however, by the will which he solemnly drew up before his departure to the cadet school at Wahlstatt. He gave his toys to his brother and sister, and arranged that the former was to provide one of his poorer schoolfellows with a *brioche* or roll daily as he himself had been in the habit of doing. His signature was preceded by the following declaration, which no doubt he copied from some old official document : "I hereby confirm that I have written the above in all truth and sincerity."

Even in those days he was in the habit of signing with a flourish, the result of a careful study and imitation of the signature on the Eau de Cologne bottles, a habit which indeed never altogether left him.

Why he should have written, "Henceforward I must insist on being left in peace," in one corner of his will we are unable to say.

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The life of a Prussian cadet in those days seems to have been regulated upon Spartan principles. It was a barrack-like system of education based upon severity and unkindness. The gaol-like rooms in which they lived were devoid of any comfort. The drill began at dawn. Porridge was a prominent feature of their diet.

On his return from his first leave the boy wrote home : "I stayed the whole evening in my room and felt dreadfully low. I couldn't keep my thoughts away from home. We were given no supper. I could only find three clean handkerchiefs and a pair of clean drawers. I couldn't sleep last night I was so badly bitten by bugs."

The cadets were not housed in classes, but lodged in dormitories without any discrimination as to age. He accordingly found but few opportunities of forming friendships based upon common ideals, for like the majority of lads of his age his interests changed rapidly. Strict subordination of the juniors to their seniors was the main thing. How could his youthful imagination have any play in such an atmosphere? "I want to arrange my playcupboard as follows," he wrote home ; "at the back a big Prussian eagle, in the middle Old Fritz and his Generals on a pedestal with a group of Black Hussars below them, and in front of them all a chain with canons on one side and 2 sentry boxes with grenadiers of Frederick the Great on the other : that is to say when I've got them all." Such were his boyish schemes.

The real romance of his existence centred round the 'hampers,' which they were allowed to receive on holidays and family birthdays which counted as such.

The starving cadet was part and parcel of old-time Prussia. It is therefore not surprising that the little boy should have reverted so often in his letters to a subject which was of such importance to himself and his fellows. The vision of

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a cigar-box held between his knees during dinner in which scraps of bread were collected with which to appease their hunger or to satisfy the cravings of a comrade who had been punished by going without his dinner, symbolises the friendship between seniors and juniors.

On another occasion, after recovering from a serious illness, he wrote to his parents as follows : " I was in hospital on Shrove Tuesday. I spent the whole day struggling for breath, with the blood pouring out of the leech bites. I thought I should never come out alive. Firstly I thank God for His gracious help and secondly I hope that the pancake season will not be over by Easter."

An incident which occurred at Kreuznach on his seventieth birthday showed that the Field-Marshal could still sympathise with the attitude of the cadets as regards the question of 'tuck.' As he emerged from General Headquarters that morning three little cadets happened to go by, who saluted him with the utmost smartness. He at once hauled them indoors and inaugurated the day by making them sit down at his well-furnished board, and fall to upon the edibles presented him by his admirers.

During their hours of instruction, the curriculum of which was mainly military, the cadets were offered very little in the way of culture, and even their elementary teaching was of a very one-sided character. The practical education of their minds therefore could hardly be called up-to-date from the point of view of realism. A great deal of rubbish was crammed into them, but instead of going to the main sources of our civilisation for inspiration, they were made to absorb out-of-date details of the past history of their country. They were made to repeat by heart the names of the dynasties that had owned the Neumark, the Lausitz and the county of Glatz. For geography they had to learn the names of strategical roads and mountain passes where

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fighting had taken place. They were told all about their old heathen gods and their Christian conquerors. The French lesson consisted of the recital of Napoleon's speeches to his marshals. In order to teach them arithmetic they were given the establishment in officers and men of a certain number of companies, and told to add them up in order to find out the strength of a regiment. The chief events in the reigns of the Margraves and Electors of Brandenburg were as familiar to them as the multiplication table.

From the few details of Roman history they acquired, they learnt that the ancient world had consisted of generals and armies who were constantly at war with one another.

The one purpose to which all their studies were directed was to convince their young minds of the paramount importance of the warlike factor in the history of humanity.

Those one-sided methods of education of which the cadet schools of the Prussian state were an outstanding example were applied indiscriminately, unfortunately as we think, by those responsible for the secondary educational system of the country during the nineteenth century. The Humanities were considered as tainted with cosmopolitanism, the example of Cato notwithstanding. The cadets of those days without exception have retained a deeply-rooted aversion for the humanistic educational standpoint. Even in his old age Hindenburg is still inclined to deny the educational value of the classics. Dead languages, he states in his memoirs, take up too much time and are too absorbing. He would like to see more attention paid to history, German, geography and gymnastics. "Is it really essential," he writes, "that the one standby of education in the obscurantist middle ages should still come first nowadays?" He has obviously never grasped the inner meaning of 'mediacval obscurantism' and of the Renaiss-

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sance. It cannot be denied, however, that there is much practical force and truth in his demand, that instruction on the modern side should be conducted on a different system from that which was in vogue in the Prussia of his youth.

We may be certain, anyhow, that Cadet von Hindenburg did not worry much about educational theories in those days. A happy-minded and realistically-inclined lad, he was preparing himself for a hero's career. His first year as a cadet coincided with the Franco-Austrian War in Upper Italy, and during his walks with his instructor, Lieutenant von Wittig, the latter would sketch him plans of the battles of Magenta and Solferino with his sword in the sand.

It was his first initiation into the art of strategy, and he was lucky, indeed, to have found so keen a student of the art of war as a mentor who could illustrate his doctrines by contemporary events. Wars and rumours of wars pursued the rising generation of soldiers wherever they went. As the boy of fourteen wrote home in February 1862, "The talk here is all of an impending war with France. Perhaps then I could become an ensign within the year, as six monthly courses would then be held in Berlin." But the hopes of the growing lad turned out to be premature, and even two years later when Prussia after fifty years of peace once more drew her sword against a foreign foe he had to stay at home.

In the meantime his one idea was to join the Central School at Berlin, to which the cadets who had reached the lower fifth form were transferred. "What particularly pleases me," he wrote, "is that I shan't have to have any more piano lessons in Berlin, as, quite apart from the expense and trouble they entail, I don't care for them and am making no progress." In those days, indeed, the bar-

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barous custom prevailed of compelling well-brought-up children of either sex, irrespective of inclination or endowment, to learn to play the piano, a custom to which young Hindenburg with his sturdy commonsense rightly objected. As so often was the case with him in later life, he set himself firmly against the shams and social self-deception which were so rife in Germany during his earlier manhood.

The brick wilderness of Berlin was now to be his home.

- . The fine building of the old Central Cadet School is still to be seen in the Neue Friedrichstrasse. It consists of two long single-storied wings with a classical entrance, upon the pediment of which are inscribed the words, " Martis et Minervae Alumnis."

Martial recklessness was a quality innate in all these Prussian schoolboys. The problem was how to teach them to practise the wisdom of Minerva in the heat of action.

So devoted already was young Hindenburg to soldiering that he could not conceive anyone adopting a different profession. As he wrote to his youngest brother, the Benjamin at home, "I hope, too, that you will give up the idea of becoming a privy councillor or a landlord and prefer the military estate." The baby of the family had plenty of time to make up his mind, as he had only just begun his first reading primer! Hindenburg's great-aunt Kniflka, with whom he lunched on Sundays in the Wilhelmstrasse, thought it best upon reflection not to post the letter.

During his second year at Berlin he was paid the compliment of being appointed page to the widowed Queen Elizabeth, the wife of Frederick William IV. At the conclusion of his first period of attendance upon her, she presented him with a gold watch in recognition of his services, which he has worn ever since. At the spring review he saw his king for the first time. Later on, both as lieutenant and as captain, he was admitted to a personal audience

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with his venerable sovereign, for in those days the relations between the monarch and his young officers were still very intimate.

In 1864 Prussia and Austria took up arms to recover the sea-girt provinces of Schleswig and Holstein from Danish tyranny. It was the beginning of a warlike era. King William was to draw the sword three times in the course of the next six years. "It is high time," wrote the young officer to his parents, "that the Hindenburghs smelt powder once more. Our family, worse luck, has been much neglected in this respect." His youthful keenness and yearning for action was all in vain, and the sixteen-year-old lad was fated to learn of the glorious victory of Düppel at the cadet school. Meanwhile his seniors, without awaiting their kit, had hurried off to Schleswig. In one of his letters home Hindenburg gave an enthusiastic description of their share in the fighting. "Three of the cadets," he wrote, "actually took part in the assault, in our uniform. One of them sent his things back the other day, and the tunic that took part in the assault is now being worn by an N.C.O. as a constant object-lesson to us."

He himself was soon to set an example to his juniors. The next time the rifles went off, and war, which he considered the normal life of a soldier, summoned him to arms, he was already a second-lieutenant and soon to be in the thick of it.

## CHAPTER III

### WAR EXPERIENCES AS A SUBALTERN

PAUL VON HINDENBURG was eighteen years of age when he joined his regiment as second-lieutenant at Danzig. A photograph of that date shows him with his cap perched at a rakish angle, his heavy basket-sword tightly girt round his hips beneath his tunic, baggy trousers, the braiding of the Guards on his collar and sleeve facings, big metal buttons on his tunic, and epaulettes on his shoulders.

The third regiment of Foot Guards, which had just been created as the result of the much-canvassed Army Reforms of 1859 and 1860, was expected to maintain the great traditions of the Foot Guards of Frederick the Great, and was meant in spite of its youth to be a picked corps like its senior, the first regiment, in which most of the older officers had served.

War once more was in the air, but war against Austria this time. Prussia's fight for the leadership of Germany was impending. Feverish preparations were made at the barracks in Danzig for mobilisation, orders for which were hourly expected. They first moved to Potsdam, where the Guard Corps was assembling, the officers wearing their high-spiked pointed helmets with greatcoats slung diagonally across the chest and pouches strapped in front, the service kit of those days. While he was there Second-Lieutenant Hindenburg, in accordance with an old custom among the Guards, took his men to visit the tomb of

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Frederick the Great. Shortly afterwards they began their march through Silesia in the footsteps of the armies of that great conqueror.

Soor and Burkersdorf, where the Guards had employed their line tactics in the old days against the troops of Maria Theresa, was the scene of Hindenburg's first action, which consisted of some desultory wood fighting with Austrian infantry, and the repulse by the regiment of two squadrons of Uhlans and the capture of their transport with the regimental chest and the diary of the Italian campaign of 1859.

The self-reliance he derived from his first successful encounter with the enemy was to enable him in the hour of danger to translate into action the enthusiasm bred in him by education and heredity, and to vindicate his choice of a soldier's career on the field of battle.

Such were the feelings inspired in him by his baptism of fire on the 28th of June. Next day, however, he and his men were ordered to clear up the battlefield and collect and bury the dead, and he realised with feelings of deep depression the sadder aspect of the glories of war. The standing wheat was stained red by the blood of the fallen, and the cries of the wounded resounded on all sides.

So this was war . . . and he was destined to witness far more terrible scenes of heroism and horror. He was accordingly only expressing his deepest conviction when he wrote two generations later, "Any one who knows what war means must wish for peace."

On the morning of the 3rd of July he was roused in wet and chilly weather from his bivouac near Königinhof, where he was on outpost duty, by the sound of distant gunfire. The troops marched forward amid streaming rain, and along such terrible roads that they were soaked to the skin with perspiration. As the heads of columns emerged

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from the valley of the Elbe they were greeted with shell fire. On they went across country. Hindenburg's company commander was wounded and his leading N.C.O. killed. Shells began to drop on the column, and very soon twenty-five men were out of action. Suddenly the whole of the huge battlefield lay in front of them. The thick clouds of smoke they saw rising into the cloudy sky were caused by the guns of the first Prussian army. Hindenburg's battalion pushed ahead through the mist and the standing corn. The new needle-gun, that magnificent new breechloader which the Prussian army authorities had viewed till lately with the utmost suspicion, was too much for the hostile infantry to the south of them, and they had to retire, with Hindenburg and his platoon in pursuit. The little band were alone and unsupported, and had to act independently in the heat of action. Suddenly they encountered an unlimbered Austrian battery, which greeted Hindenburg and his men with a volley of grape. One fragment struck him on the helmet, splintering the eagle to pieces, and the young leader fell unconscious to the ground. Before long, however, he recovered and charged the battery, five guns of which were captured while the remaining three escaped. The incident was recorded by the aged commander two generations later in his military recollections. "I did feel proud," he wrote, "as I stood gasping and bleeding among my captured guns."

The hard-fought battle of Königgrätz was not yet over so far as our young wounded hero was concerned, for the cockfeathers of hostile riflemen were seen advancing through the corn. The platoon had barely time to deliver a few rounds of rapid fire before taking cover in a sunken road. Just as they did so some Austrian squadrons swept by them in the mist without noticing Hindenburg and his platoon, who were again completely isolated. The former

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apparently were unable to make much further headway, for riderless horses soon appeared, followed by the main body, whose white cloaks afforded an easy target to the little band as they galloped by. His next task after rejoining the regiment was to help to defend the burning village of Rosberitz, which was being attacked on three sides. Moreover, the enemy had got round behind them. Under cover of the burning cottages, however, they were able to get away. The hardly-pressed regiments of the Prussian Guard rallied round their standards and prepared to deliver another assault. Reinforcements came up and the order was given to charge. The enemy evacuated the village and shortly afterwards the battlefield, and Prussia had gained the victory which decided the issue of the war. During this hard-fought day Lieutenant von Hindenburg lost half of his platoon.

Hindenburg, wearing a cap on account of his wound, accompanied the army during its advance by forced marches into the enemy's country. He had been advised to go into hospital, but he refused to leave his men so long as there was a chance of any further fighting. His hopes, however, were not to be fulfilled : it was a case merely of rapid marching ; three weeks after the battle the tower of the Church of St. Stephen could be seen through their field glasses, and the armistice was concluded only twenty miles away from the old Imperial capital. The rejoicings which attended their triumphal progress home were marred by the spectre of cholera, which took toll of many a brave fellow who had come scatheless through the campaign.

Father and son met at Prague. The former, who had retired from the army, had been attached to an ambulance as a member of the Order of St John throughout the campaign. Together they visited the battlefield of Frederick the Great, where the monument erected by Joseph II

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to the first Prussian conqueror of Austria was still to be seen. How different from the national war of 1914, when not even the monuments of the historical past were spared!

In spite of the dynastic character of its wars it was a genuinely liberal age, and quite incapable of the foul propaganda which was to poison the springs of European goodwill during the World War.

It was early in September that the Guards, to the strains of the National Anthem, marched beneath the arch of honour that had been erected on the frontier of the Mark near Grossenhain. The solemn entry into Berlin took place on the 20th of September. Prior to the ceremony the troops paraded on the site of what is now the Platz der Republik of the Reichstag and the Column of Victory, but was then a sandy parade ground. Hindenburg had only just pinned the Order of the Red Eagle with Swords on his breast, or rather a lady among the onlookers who had a needle handy had been permitted to sew the young officer's first war decoration on to his tunic, when the march began through the Brandenburger Tor to the Opernplatz, where the young warrior wearing his new decoration filed past His Majesty the King and the statues of Blücher, Scharnhorst and Gneisenau.

As the result of the war Prussia not only acquired a considerable amount of territory, but became a homogeneous state as well. The outlying portions of the kingdom, the 'Prussian States' as they were called, were now connected in consequence of the annexation of Hanover, and the 'Corridor' created by the Congress of Vienna disappeared. The older generation, however, was deeply attached to the exiled Royal family, and the conquerors were given a very cold reception by the kingdom of the Guelphs. Hindenburg's regiment received the news of its transfer to Hanover with disgust. Political difficulties in

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the way of social intercourse with the inhabitants were luckily obviated on ceremonial occasions by the fact that the same tune was common to the national anthems of both countries, but that did not stop the street boys running after them and shouting "Cuckoo" at the "poor devils of Prussians."

The 'hero of the Rosberitz,' as the young subaltern was called by his brother officers, was now bent on excelling his fellows in peace-time duties. This is not a subsequent invention, but a fact confirmed in various particulars by his old comrades of those days. The value of bayonet drill in hand-to-hand fighting had been brought home to him at Rosberitz, and his main concern was to see that it was carried on under warlike conditions. He was determined to have 'casualties,' and therefore arranged that men whose names began with a certain letter were to drop dead at the word of command, victims of a subaltern's whim!

For all that, his behaviour at Rosberitz seems really to have been very much above the average, for it nearly obtained him the Order *Pour le Mérite*, the most valued war decoration in the Prussian army. His name was actually submitted for it. Another half-century, however, was to elapse before he wore the blue and gold ribbon round his neck. It was not a good thing, the wise old man once stated reminiscently, for a subaltern of eighteen years of age to have such honours heaped upon him. Most of the youngsters, he added, who got the Order *Pour le Mérite* had turned out none too well.

It must not be imagined that the newly annexed town of Hanover, in which the Guards were garrisoned, was a paradise for the conquerors. Our previous and subsequent history affords us examples in abundance of the humiliating treatment meted out by a haughty caste of arrogant

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warriors to a peaceful and discontented population with a view to maintaining it in subjection.

The mess was run upon even more modest lines than a middle-class home. The subalterns were very particular not to give offence by talking too loudly as they sat over their beer in the restaurants, nor to frighten the inhabitants or to go across country when out riding. They lived within their means, let the girls alone, and never claimed the best places at the Court Theatre. Duty and their harmless amusements were their only distractions, in fact their conduct was exemplary. One of them asserted, for instance, that a brother officer could eat twenty cakes at a sitting.

The officer in question, Arthur von Loebell, who ended his service as a lieutenant-general, was destined to be the lifelong friend of the President. Young Paul telegraphed to him on his wedding day : " May your good fortune be unbounded and taste as sweet as a chocolate cake." Even in the midst of the World War the Field-Marshal found time to send a congratulatory telegram to Arthur on the latter's seventieth birthday, which contained an allusion to the old cake story, and concluded with the hope that the recipient was " Sound in wind and limb and still able to enjoy many a chocolate cake."

Such trifles, some of my readers may perhaps say, are hardly worth recording. I do not agree with them, for they shed a light upon the spiritual and intellectual worth of a particular generation. Simple anecdotes of this kind may perhaps raise a smile, but they betoken an unspoiled nature and a fundamental healthiness of outlook which tend to promote concentration and uprightness of character. Thirty years later we find a young subaltern in the Guards telegraphing to his brother officer on a similar occasion : " May you command the whole world from your new eyrie."

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The contrast between the two periods is obvious. The latter message with its exaggeration and absence of any simple human touch is typical of the new 'Wilhelminian' era.

In the meantime, Prince William, the future German Emperor, had assumed command of the Hussars of the Guard at Potsdam. Champagne flowed in torrents in the mess, valuable horses were done in, flatterers wormed their way into the good graces of the Prince, and fiery denunciations of inferior nationalities, races and classes became the order of the day. The generation to which Hindenburg belonged had by this time, alas! either fallen at St. Privat or was engaged in more serious work at the headquarters of the General Staff.

The friendships formed in those happy days at Hanover were suddenly to be severed : Death was about to reap his harvest at St. Privat. The midsummer of 1870, like that of 1914, was oppressively hot. It was now to be all Germany or nothing. The mine exploded, but Bismarck had made his preparations very differently on this occasion from the wretched Bethmann in 1914. Outstanding difficulties were all cleared up before half the world could intervene. The foe this time was the heir of the Corsican, the arch-enemy of German unity, Imperial France which had never abandoned the age-long dream of European hegemony. *À Berlin, à Berlin* was the cry ! The Prussians, however, were first in the field and carried the war into France.

Several weeks were spent by the regiment in marching to and fro in the valleys of the Saar and the Moselle before Second-Lieutenant von Hindenburg, who in the meantime had been made adjutant of his battalion, came face to face with the foe. They had nearly reached the Meuse without seeing any sign of the enemy, when they were ordered to proceed towards Metz. On the 17th of August they reached the battlefield of Vionville, which bore eloquent traces of

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the severity of the fighting. Only the day before Paul von Hindenburg senior, his cousin and namesake, and a captain in the Dragoons of the Guard, had been killed in the heroic cavalry attack at Mars-la-Tour, and now his junior was standing helmet in hand beside the newly-dug grave in which his relative had just been interred. But it was no time for sentimentality, and soon the adjutant was to horse and away, taking careful stock of the ground upon which to-morrow's battle was to be fought.

The order to unfurl the colours was greeted with cheers. The roar of the guns grew louder and louder, until human nerves could hardly stand it. As it moved forward the brigade came under flanking fire from St. Privat. An anxious pause ensued. Then as the sun was sinking they came into action. A hurricane of fire swept towards them as they advanced over the open ground—but by nightfall victory was theirs.

"God's mercy," he wrote to his parents from his bivouac on the battlefield, "has visibly protected me. I was on horseback the whole time beside my Commanding Officer. The latter's horse got a mitrailleuse bullet in its leg, and a rifle bullet hit the leg of my boot. Why I kept my presence of mind all through the action I can't imagine"—a simple account, typical of the modest soldier to whom boasting has ever been repulsive.

It should be stated that in that one hour the third regiment of the Guards lost 36 officers and 1,064 men. Nearly seventy per cent. of the officers were killed. The Commanding Officer of Hindenburg's battalion was the only field officer to survive. He now assumed the command of the regiment, and Hindenburg became his regimental adjutant.

The attack of the Guards on St. Privat has been described subsequently in the history of the war as unnecessary from

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the tactical point of view and a pure piece of heroic folly. And yet, instead of making a fuss about his terrible experience, the fortunate subaltern merely expressed his surprise at having kept his head.

The letter which he wrote to his father on the 2nd of September from the battlefield of Sedan contains the following passage : " I must say that the French fought very well. The Emperor has been made prisoner and is with the Emperor. A curious feature of the action was the care we had to take during our march south-westwards to avoid Belgian territory." What a sober and objective account of the greatest feat of arms of his times, and how devoid of any trace of exultation ! The main features of the battle from his point of view were the bravery of the enemy, and the fact that they themselves had respected neutrality and not committed a breach of international law. How inexpressibly sad do his words sound to the good European of to-day, as he reflects upon the devastation of Belgium in 1914 and the insults heaped upon the German troops by their Allied adversaries.

Three weeks later he was able to write from his quarters outside Paris and congratulate his parents on their silver wedding. Beneath the gilded dome of the Invalides, which he could see sparkling in the sunlight, lay buried the great foe of his ancestors, who had once so haughtily rebuffed his grandfather at Schloss Finckenstein in East Prussia. Months of horror were still to elapse before the " Jerusalem of the Crusaders," as the Prussian subaltern termed the old-world capital, surrendered to its besiegers. Communication trenches, cannon-crowned knolls, ravaged fields, burnt cornstacks, bloodstained snow, continual hand-to-hand fighting during the sorties, and gunfire day and night. Such was the kaleidoscopic impression he retained of this period.

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All this, of course, does not sound very dreadful to anyone who has been through the World War. It must be borne in mind, however, that there is a psychological limit to human impressionability as there is to human endurance of pain, beyond which the soul becomes impervious to further horror. The youth of 1870 was no less affected by its terrible experiences than the soldiers of the World War by the horrible engines with which they had to contend. The old warrior has since found much food for thought in reflecting upon the spiritual aspect of this question.

In the meantime the policy of blood and iron had converted the mystical crown of the Emperor Barbarossa into a startling reality. Prussians of the old stock could hardly believe that their king was to wear the symbol of national unity and become the national warlord of the allied princes and races, or that a North German leader was to convert the Federation into an Empire.

On the evening of the 16th of January Regimental-Adjutant von Hindenburg received the order to attend the proclamation of the Empire at Versailles two days later. To think that he of all people should have been chosen to witness this epoch-making event, he as representing the officers of the regiment, with a sergeant on behalf of the rank and file!

Versailles, however, was nearly thirty-two miles away, and the roads were cut to pieces and frozen hard. The night was dark and riding impossible. Hindenburg and his sergeant accordingly began their journey in a transport wagon, which took them eight miles on their way. There they found a house, in which they spent the night huddled up in straw before a fire. Next day such an icy wind was blowing that further progress was impossible. At last they got their kits loaded on to a two-wheeled cart and started afresh. The overloaded vehicle soon collapsed, and they

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were held up again ; luckily there was a field smithy not far away, and they were eventually able to proceed.

During their journey they met the most grotesque caravans, consisting of potato carts, gala coaches and market gardeners' carts decorated with Prussian flags, which had all been impressed to convey the Prussian soldiers to the palace of the Roi Soleil, where they were to stand godfather to the newborn German Empire. That evening the officers dined together at the Hotel des Résevoirs, a place that was to become sadly familiar to the Germans fifty years later at the second Versailles of 1919, when the peace delegation of the Republic fought desperately on behalf of the Reich with the victors of the World War.

The imperial ceremony took place in the Galerie des Glaces. The flashing swords, the brilliant uniforms, with a forest of standards as a background, formed a brilliant tableau representing the apothecosis of war. The impressiveness of the ceremony was enhanced by the quiet dignity of the venerable sovereign. Twenty paces away stood Lieutenant von Hindenburg, whom the fortune of war had chosen from among his comrades to be present at this historic scene. Providence had singled out this child of destiny for its favours very early in his career, and he also was one day to be called their 'old master' by the German people.

The South Germans were conspicuous for the exuberance of their joy, and vied with one another in doing honour to their suzerain, the King of Prussia, with whom they had so recently been at war. "We Prussians," wrote Hindenburg in his letters, "were more reserved for reasons connected with our history which had made us conscious of our real worth when Germany was only a geographical expression."

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Next day the French replied with a last sortie from Mont Valérien, but in vain. The capitulation, the armistice and the surrender of the forts took place in rapid succession, and at the beginning of March our lieutenant accompanied by an orderly was able to ride over the Pont de Neuilly beneath the Arc de Triomphe from the Champs Elysées to the Tuilleries, and get a last sight of the haughty walls of this castle which a few weeks later were to be burned to the ground by a gang of Communist madmen.

From the heights above the Seine and the outer *enceinte* the Germans looked on at the horrible drama. Large telescopes had been mounted by some enterprising Frenchmen, through which a better view could be obtained of the street fighting—for a few sous one could witness the death agonies of a nation. Hindenburg put them aside—he at any rate found no pleasure in the distress of an alien people. Shortly afterwards the French ‘Government troops’—an expression the meaning of which was to be brought home to us after our defeat in 1918—stormed the heights of Montmartre, the last stronghold of the insurrection—and the Prussian Guard could take leave of a conquered country beneath whose soil so many of their comrades lay buried. After a three days’ railway journey they arrived in Berlin, where a great review was to be held in celebration of the victory. The Guard paraded on the Tempelhof drill ground, and then for the second and last time Hindenburg marched in his uniform through the Brandenburger Tor amid all the splendour and colour of military display. The next time he made his solemn entry beneath the Quadriga it would be as an old man, wearing a tall hat and frock-coat, and seated in a powerful Mercedes with the old anti-Prussian colours of the Republic on the radiator.

Such was the youth of the man who, during three generations, was to play an increasingly active part in the

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perpetual process of national development, first of all as son, then as hero, and last of all as father of his country.

In reviewing Hindenburg's youth we must be on our guard against the tendency of the psychologist to discover unmistakable traces of future greatness in the early career of one who was fated to become a figure of world-wide celebrity. Lieutenant Paul von Hindenburg was merely a very good average example, both in his views and his behaviour, of the caste to which he belonged. The qualities of healthy self-respect, modest self-assurance and steadfast courage without any trace of presumption and faithfulness in the performance of his duties which we so much admire in him, were not peculiar to him alone, but were common to thousands of his social equals and contemporaries. No sculptor or historian has commemorated their services ; but they were none the less valuable for that.

Popular and military leaders very rarely show any signs of genius in their early youth. They are generally the normal product of their surroundings and natural disposition. Their rise to greatness depends whether at a later period it is the whimsical will of fate, in the profounder sense of the word, to set them some gigantic task to perform. They cannot influence wide empires and generations to come merely by some violent manifestation of their personality. That is reserved to the demi-gods of culture, who fulfil the purposes of their mighty existence almost alone and unaided.

Hindenburg's career is a very good example of the theory that the call to assume the leadership of the nation or to play a decisive part in war or peace is due to circumstances beyond the individual control. The boy who tamed wild horses and throttled lions, or predicted the political changes of the next century, is merely the creation of a credulous posterity which prefers legend to reality.

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Exaggerated accounts of the mis-spent youth of the future hero turn out usually to be no less fictitious. To say that Frederick the Great was an idle *bon vivant* in his youth is just as inaccurate as to assert that the first Hohenzollern Emperor specially distinguished himself during the preparatory stages of his career. Bismarck in his youth was a wild junker in troublous times, and Hindenburg an honest soldier in an age of simplicity and discipline.

And yet the youth of a military or political leader is of fundamental importance, in view of the estimate we are subsequently to form of him. No one can jump over his own shadow. Hindenburg throughout the whole of his life has never departed from the standard of virtuous simplicity, sterling honesty, strict unsselfishness and dutifulness which was inculcated into him at an early period of his life. The ensuing generation was to wear its courage and responsibility too often, alas ! like a decoration. The ensuing generation was to be . . . Ludendorff.

## CHAPTER IV

### STAFF OFFICER AND GENERAL AND CORPS COMMANDER

HINDENBURG's manhood was spent in the study of the more technical side of his profession. There is something very peculiar about the career of a soldier from the point of view of his professional attainments. A soldier from being raw material is gradually worked up until he becomes a finished article. The junior officers are an integral part of their unit, and are indistinguishable as regards their functions from the seething masses of the columns which are moved hither and thither independently of their own volition. Of course the individual is taught to give orders and act independently, but he plays a passive part in the military system. The active part is played by the Staffs, from battalion headquarters upwards to the great General Staff. It is they who decide as to tactical methods, and who combine the apparently disconnected parts of the military machine into an organised whole which is linked up by a complicated nervous system with the responsible brain at the centre.

The visible proofs of his coolness and courage on his tunic and the exemplary nature of his confidential reports ensured a favourable reception of his application to devote himself to the intellectual side of his profession, which in the army as elsewhere controls the machinery and keeps it up to date.

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After a period of hard cramming he passed his entrance examination to the War Academy, and was seconded to Berlin for a three years' course at this Military University.

The two years between the close of the Franco-German War and Hindenburg's arrival in the prosperous capital had been spent by him in drilling recruits at Hanover. The scientific methods of tuition, in vogue at the War Academy, which consisted in the absorbing and rejecting of a lot of old useless information, rather disillusioned him at first. He attended lectures on the art of war and tactics as practised by our forefathers, and on mathematics, under compulsion. At last, however, he was allowed to enter upon the practical study of the art of war, which may be briefly summed up as the knowledge essential to the efficient performance of the duties of a Chief of the Staff or of a General commanding an army in the field.

His position gave him the entrée to the brilliant society that frequented Court circles, where men of independent views, savants and artists, and such like were to be met with. It was his first encounter with the classes which represented the prevailing tendencies in politics and culture. True, the noblest qualities of the century had disappeared. Luxury masqueraded as creative exuberance, and culture began to be distorted in the direction of the Court Prussian and the Imperial Byzantine.

Mommsen and Menzel, it is true, maintained an attitude of proud independence. The numerous satellites of the new dispensation, however, who proclaimed the glories of Barbarossa, the semi-official poets and sculptors of this illustrious system, were becoming increasingly superficial and pretentious. The obvious tendency in an age of such resplendent military glory was to worship discipline and to re-echo in service fashion the opinions of the 'pillars of society.'

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The ostentation which characterised the early years of the Empire produced an aesthetic school, which worshipped a sham baroque and fostered a tendency to theatricalism. The prehistoric heroes and the sanguinary sagas of the Teutons were revived amid scenes of surpassing splendour. Even Richard Wagner's dramatic musical genius was compelled to pay homage to the cult of the sword and the carousals of our German ancestors and to make bards and hobgoblins its theme. Germania, a huge crowned flaxen-haired female arrayed in a mailed breastplate and girt with a sword about her hips, was symbolical of the age.

Ever since the early days of Frederick the Great's gatherings at Sanssouci the Court and Government in North Germany had stood apart from the main current of intellectual life, Wilhelm von Humboldt and a few such like notwithstanding. But now, when the Empire was only too willing to pay court to culture, the age of Pericles refused to be revived. Plaster casts in place of sculpture and empty pathos in lieu of oratory were all there was to show for it.

Conditions were to get progressively worse as time went by : for the present, however, a genuinely civic spirit and the distinction of mind of the old aristocracy partially delayed the process of decay. It must be confessed that Germany's place in the sun had been purchased by the sacrifice of much spiritual enlightenment.

Young Hindenburg, of course, was completely unconscious of all this when his timid excursion into the realm of the ' liberal arts ' took place. He listened to the ponderous disputationes of the leaders of opinion, and observed their interested encomiums of the splendid conditions that he himself had helped to bring about at the risk of his life without getting his head turned. His new sphere of work was indeed for some time one of those least affected by the new fashions.

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The General Staff still worthily maintained the ancient traditions of Prussia. It was no Elysium of culture, but a school of thought and ethics that looked to Sparta and Rome for its examples. Helmuth von Moltke, who was not only its official but its spiritual head, was not perhaps so great a general as jingo propagandists would have us believe, but a man of steadfast rectitude, whose professional responsibility and sagacity were unaffected by the noisy disputations around him.

Hindenburg has himself described to us the manner in which he was taught to conceive his duties. "The first requirement in a General Staff Officer," he wrote, "was to subordinate his individuality and his actions to the general welfare." He was to work unseen, that is to say, prefer the shadow to the substance.

This principle, which the new generation was abandoning, had been the tradition of his doughty old ancestors and was to be his lifelong inspiration. No one held it more firmly than Moltke, to whom self-advertisement was as abhorrent as it was to be to Hindenburg.

After four years of study he was seconded for service with the General Staff and a year later was promoted captain and allowed to don the pink stripes. His career away from his unit began on the Staff at Stettin. Here too at first he was more occupied with detail than with the intellectual side of his profession. Accuracy in office work was, he discovered, the first essential. The reviews, however, of the various garrisons by the Corps Commander, at which he assisted in his official capacity, gave him his first insight into the functioning of the huge machine independently of red-tape and bureaucracy.

Very shortly afterwards his Corps took part in the Imperial manoeuvres, and he was afforded an opportunity of exercising the art of leadership. The Russian General

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Skobeleff, the victor of the war with Turkey, had been invited to attend the manœuvres. Hindenburg, however, was put off by his boasting, which seemed to him thoroughly un-Prussian.

While serving on the General Staff at Stettin Captain von Hindenburg married. His wife was the daughter of General von Sperling, who had terminated his career as Chief of the Staff of the 1st Army during the war of 1870-71, and had shortly afterwards died as the result of a prolonged illness the evil effects of which had been increased by the hardships of the campaign.

Fräulein Gertrud Wilhelmine von Sperling was descended like himself from an ancient military stock, and had grown up amid surroundings similar in every way to his own. She had been well and simply brought up, and her attitude towards life, the result both of upbringing and inheritance, was identical with that of her husband : she possessed, moreover, a natural fund of cheerfulness which helped to correct his tendency to matter-of-factness and stolidity. By far the more temperamental of the two, she loved a hearty laugh and surpassed him in the arts and graces of conversation. This tall and slender girl was a bundle of nerves, and the outline of her profile was of classical purity. Her nature nevertheless, like his, was a very simple one, and they soon learned to appreciate and understand their respective peculiarities.

The lifelong association of problematical natures may yield a richer harvest of weal and woe. Where the happiness of self-surrender is threatened by the dangers of constant association, love is transfigured by the light of the imagination : indifference and misunderstandings, on the other hand, are a constant menace to this state of bliss. Marital constancy is compatible only with moderation of the affections, and with entire confidence as to the demands

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each party can make upon the other. Spiritual discipline, social adaptation and renunciation of selfish adventures are essential to a happy marriage. Personal values must be absorbed into values common to the whole family. Such ethics inspire the husband and wife to ensure the continuity of the race. Responsibility towards past and future generations prevents ruthless self-expression. Such are the distinctive features of these humdrum marriages which, while lacking in superlatives, are not disturbed by cross currents. Genuine piety, a comfortable sense of humour, and an active sense of duty which constantly inspires its owner to grapple with problems of increasing complexity and so enlarge the sphere of his achievements, are the best antidotes to the deadening effect of habit.

Hindenburg's marriage was one long story of harmonious intimacy. The real soldiers of those days, the men who were entrusted with the preparations for war and took pride in the perfection with which they had executed them, afford us frequent examples of calm and happy homes, and honest but matter-of-fact private lives. Hindenburg mentions his wife once, but only once, in his memoirs, and then in words that are full of significance. "My wife was a loving partner, who faithfully and unwearingly shared my anxieties and my labours and became my best friend and comrade." It was admittedly not one of those exciting love-romances which poets of the lyre or sword, such as Goethe or Napoleon, hold up to us as an ideal.

Humdrum marriages of this kind, which were typical of the old Prussian days, are not suitable for filming. Any attempt, moreover, on the part of the indiscreet to look for episodes of gallantry in the lives of the great are doomed in this instance to failure. Men of Hindenburg's stamp do not lend themselves to savoury anecdotes. Their organism would seem to have been rendered immune from their

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youth upwards against the temptation to stray from their predestined path. The innate harmony of his nature was consummated in his marriage in a manner imperceptible to the crowd.

The individual example can never serve as a model to those who are differently constituted. Everyone must fashion his private existence in accordance with his needs. The qualities of the one may be the defects of another. Hindenburg's own peculiar moral standard would seem very superficial but for its religious foundation. Religion, however, cannot be artificially acquired in times when public controversy is raging with regard to *Weltanschauung*. The cultural driving power from which Hindenburg derived his self-confidence is something that cannot be acquired.

Those who are responsible for our lesson books, instead of depicting our leaders as they were in real life, are always trying to produce conventional models of morality, which they hold up to us for imitation. Hindenburg's extraordinary lack of complexity has been made to serve as an argument in favour of a cultural policy of extreme narrowness. The example of noble simplicity and lofty morality given us by Hindenburg is as little suitable for general imitation as that of a libertine. The real Hindenburg is too dear to us to be made the subject of a cheap legend.

Staff-Captain von Hindenburg, we may be quite sure, never bothered about setting himself up as a moral example to posterity in general. His feelings, thoughts and actions were prompted by motives which he never questioned. His career had begun most auspiciously, his professional prospects were excellent, his family life was assured, and the sphere of his activities well defined. He was given his first independent post in the year 1881, when he was appointed General Staff Officer of the 1st Division at Königsberg, the capital of Old Prussia.

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His divisional commander, Verdy du Vernois by name, was a peculiarly broad-minded officer of great scientific attainments. Verdy had been attached to Russian headquarters at Warsaw during the desperate popular uprising of 1863, the third of the Polish insurrections in the course of the nineteenth century, and had thereby been afforded ample opportunity of studying the military and political problems involved in the relations between Germany and Russia, complicated as they were by national cross-currents. He was now to hand on his information and his conclusions to his Staff Officer.

Popular belief will have it that Hindenburg even in those days busied himself with working out the plans of his subsequent campaigns among the Masurian lakes and in Poland. That, of course, is an exaggeration : the fact remains, however, that he learned more from General Verdy than from anyone else, and that the latter taught him a new method of studying the theory of war. The object of their investigations was less the action taken by commanders in the past than the action that should have been taken in view of a given situation. The value of the applied method devised by Verdy was eventually recognised, and the elastic nature of our conduct of operations in the east during the Great War was probably due in the main to his strategical tuition.

Hindenburg's work as a Staff Officer was now to suffer interruption for twelve months, during which time he commanded an infantry company in Fraustadt, a small Polish provincial town, where his men were scattered about in thirty-three different billets. His recruits were almost entirely of Polish nationality, and mutual comprehension was beset with difficulties ; they were a loyal and willing lot, but somewhat inclined to drunkenness and dishonesty. He was thus afforded an opportunity of displaying his

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paternal virtues, of which he took full advantage. He dealt with their peccadilloes very indulgently, and endeavoured to reform them by earnest exhortation rather than by severity. Soon he was able to notice a satisfying improvement in the discipline. His father had worked under similar conditions in the old days at Pinne, while he himself was learning to read and write and playing with Aunt Rappard's billygoat.

At the age of thirty-seven he was transferred to the General Staff at Berlin with the rank of Major, and settled down with his family, which in the meantime had been completed by the birth of several children, for a short ten years in the capital. Hindenburg was attached to Count Schlieffon, the author of the two fronts' scheme, whose strategy, ideas and plans formed the original basis of the advance of our army in the World War. He was also commissioned to give tactical instruction at the War Academy ; he was therefore heavily shackled by his duties. Even he, who till then had never made any fuss about work, could not help writing : "The days often seem too short. I am getting quite accustomed to working all night."

A new edition of the Field Service Regulations, the code of every well-trained army, in which accuracy is of paramount importance, was in course of preparation. Hindenburg was associated with much of the preliminary work, and edited the chapters dealing with operations of mixed bodies of troops.

Prince William of Prussia took part in a Staff ride that lasted for three days, which was held for the purpose of putting the new regulations to a practical test. It was the first time that Hindenburg had been brought into contact with his future Emperor and King, whom at heart he never cared for although he never failed in his respect towards him. The two men were too fundamentally anti-

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pathetical to be mutually attracted. An invisible barrier was thus erected between them, which not even the bestowal of highest honours by the Emperor upon his deserving General could ever break down.

The aged Moltke was still the presiding genius of the General Staff, but his place was soon to be taken by the romantically-minded and unreliable favourite of William II, Count Waldersee, who gradually perverted the spirit of comradeship which hitherto had distinguished that school of leadership. For the present, however, Moltke still reigned supreme. Major von Hindenburg looked upon every one of his meetings with the venerable Field-Marshal as a wonderful experience.

On one occasion at a princely *soirée* they were looking at a picture which represented the meeting of Prince Frederick Charles and the Crown Prince on the battlefield of Königgrätz. A general who had been present was saying that Frederick Charles had exclaimed on that memorable occasion : "Thank God, Fritz, you turned up. Otherwise things might have gone badly," when suddenly Moltke, who was selecting a cigar in the background, strode up to them. "There was no need for the Prince to say so," he exclaimed sharply ; "he knew that the Crown Prince had received his orders and was expected to arrive about midday." He then turned on his heels and left them.

The Prussia and Germany of Hindenburg's youth were rapidly disappearing. In 1891 he stood by the deathbed of the victor in the wars for German unity. Moltke was dead : and the question naturally arose, who would lead them in the next war ? He was too modest, we may be sure, even to have thought of himself in this connection. "I was allowed," he wrote, "to see him the day after he died. He was lying in state without his wig, and the wonderful out-

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line of his head showed up to the best advantage. A wreath of laurels about his brow was the only thing needed to complete his resemblance to a Caesar."

The aged Prince, the Imperator of the days when Prussia had risen to greatness, who had nothing of a Caesar about him, but had climbed the steep ascent to glory in humble reliance on Providence, had died three years previously at the age of ninety. Hindenburg was chosen to form part of the guard of honour that watched over the body of his "beloved Master" in the cathedral. Did he feel that a turning-point in our history had arrived, did he anticipate the dangers of the new era that was to begin a few months later with the accession of the grandson?

A grey piece of marble that formed part of the pavement in the old cathedral upon which the coffin of William I rested is one of the old Field-Marshal's most valued possessions. "I can hardly describe what I feel when I look at this stone, especially in view of what is going on now," he exclaimed sadly one day many years later, after the collapse of the government of the younger William. Simple words, but eloquent of profound disillusionment!

Immediately after Bismarck's dismissal the Emperor inaugurated a complete change in the system of government, and began to foster a taste for theatricalism in the army. Hindenburg, in the meantime, in happy ignorance of the new fashions, was working as head of a section in the Prussian Ministry of War, where the old spirit of severe realism had entrenched itself. Verdy du Vernois, the chief representative of the Scientific School and a disciple of Moltke, had become Minister of War, and had immediately sent for his old Staff Officer of Königsberg days to help him upon taking up his appointment.

Hindenburg was now for the first time in his life to come into contact with the officialdom of the Wilhelmstrasse.

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The formalism of bureaucracy struck him as much more complicated than the system of autonomy in vogue in the army. Results were less important than the avoidance of official irregularities. At the same time he realised the value of extreme thoroughness and of continuity in administrative practice. He never became one of those theorists who regard technicalities as of more importance than essentials. A realist by tradition, his constant endeavour was to simplify matters rather than complicate them artificially for the sake of his own credit.

His work, dry and technical though it was, gave him complete satisfaction. He collaborated in drawing up the new engineer regulations, and was chiefly responsible for those dealing with the introduction of heavy artillery into field warfare. The art of engineering was assuming increasing importance in the army. The subaltern who once regarded bayonet fighting as the main thing in warfare had become a versatile expert, deeply versed in the ever-increasing number of battle formations. Many were inclined to overrate the value of the technical improvements in armaments that had been rendered possible by the rapid advance of industry. Hindenburg took a juster view of the matter : he quite saw that technical achievements must be exploited to the full. But, as he said on one occasion when he was being shown some new engine, which according to its inventor would upset every one of the principles of war, "Don't forget that it is the man himself who is the decisive factor, and that the only use of the machine is to intensify the effect of his action. The will is what matters. It is the character of the fighter which enables him to use his weapon to the best advantage" ; a principle to which he remained faithful when he became a civilian leader. He was never converted to the modern Wilhelminian belief in the machine, and consequently never fell a victim to the

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illusions of intellectual materialism, which a subsequent generation has christened propaganda.

When do we attain the summit of our powers ? At thirty years of age our best work still lies before us, at fifty we can still hope to produce yet more convincing proof of the value of our constructive efforts. There is no fixed standard in such matters. Much depends upon the biological factor. A man who is still in full possession of his intellectual faculties and whose organs function perfectly at the age of eighty, must have been young at the age of forty. There are a few instances, of course, of savants, business men and manufacturers whose best creative work has been accomplished in their old age.

Responsible positions, in which ability is displayed to the best advantage when tempered by discretion, and where experience is more important than intelligence, and the habit of affairs, afford new and unequalled opportunities to old age. Do not let us hastily conclude that because these factors as a rule tell in favour of a general or a popular politician that young statesmen or soldiers are necessarily devoid of the imposing qualifications in question. Some of the most heroic figures in history have been illumined by the rays of the rising as well as of the setting sun.

Facial development generally keeps pace with the gradual advance towards maturity. When do the features of a great man finally assume the shape which we regard as the complete expression of his personality ? The man who grows up with his destiny attains in middle age at the latest that set appearance which we associate with him. Napoleon is a striking instance in point. Whether the youthful genius survives or not to extreme old age is quite immaterial. We shall always picture Frederick the Great to ourselves as the victor of the Seven Years' War and not as a shrunken old man.

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Like his royal 'old master' Hindenburg only found himself when he was far advanced in life. The photograph of him when a captain at the age of thirty-five shows no trace whatever of the well-known but stern features of the Field-Marshal. The thin pointed moustache is utterly out of keeping with the heavy almost shapeless moulding of the jaws. His eye does not bespeak great breadth of outlook. His forehead, though prominent, gives no sign of future greatness. His thick hair is parted in the middle right round down the back of his somewhat slanting skull; an ugly fashion to say the least of it.

It was only when he became a general that the countenance of this very average-looking soldier began to assume an appearance of greatness. Then only was that martial type developed which is characteristic of so many sturdy noblemen of the provinces and brave soldiers of history. Good-humoured surliness still predominated: it was not until he was almost seventy years of age and in a position of supreme authority that his expression gradually took on that marble cast.

In 1903, at the age of forty-six, he bade adieu to the school of generalship, where he himself by dint of teaching and long administrative practice had acquired the art of leadership.

The command of a regiment, to which he was now appointed, afforded him a welcome relaxation from long years of office work, and sleepless nights, and brought him into contact once more with living realities in the shape of the fifteen hundred officers and men who served under his orders.

Work that he could do well was a sheer source of enjoyment to him, though to be sure there were others who had not so much to their credit, and whose future prospects were far less favourable than those of Hindenburg, who

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could command a regiment equally well. His rise to the highest rank in his profession was well assured : no one who had filled successive posts as a General Staff Officer so creditably as he had could fail at any rate to command a Division.

The fact that competition was eliminated by the selection of candidates for future leadership at so early a stage in their career and that during the best years of their lives they were free from any anxiety as to their future advancement was one of the advantages as well as the disadvantages of the military hierarchical system. Be that as it may, the picked pupils of the Staff College very soon left behind them their many seniors who otherwise would have stood in the way of their promotion.

Whereas the future minister had to climb every rung of the ladder amid intrigues and unfortunate incidents, which constantly threatened to upset his political equilibrium, the future general had everything made easy for him. He had not to practise the arts of the weathercock ; he was hardly ever in danger of becoming the victim of intrigue. Dismissal from the service was only to be feared as a rule by the official rank and file, who had constantly done regimental duty and who were due for promotion from the rank of major. The careers of the chosen two or three hundred were assured, and they had no need to worry about influential backing. They were not popularity-hunters in the "carrière ouverte aux talents."

The disadvantages of a stabilised system such as we have described was that future generals and generals themselves were too inclined to become absorbed in their professional duties. They only regarded life in its manifold aspects from the point of view of the service, *i.e.* as how it affected themselves. Everything that was advantageous from a military point of view was bound in their opinion to be right. The

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German generals, who were unequalled in their way as specialists, rarely attempted to complete their attainments by including in them a knowledge of public administration.

In Prussia and Germany the soldier had always been accounted superior to the civilian : a state of things which not only tended to paralyse the sense of political responsibility but also inclined our generals to deal with questions, the implications of which they did not thoroughly understand.

It was entirely in keeping with the character of William II that he should have accentuated the defects of this system of military prepotence in an age when civilian affairs were becoming preponderatingly important and have compromised the advantages inherent in our system of promotion when properly handled by his arbitrary favouritism and personal dislikes. The heroes of 1860 and 1870, indeed, suffered less from this courtly patronage : it was the younger generation rather which as time went on were to become increasingly the victims of the whims and the imperialistic ideas of the Supreme War Lord.

It was in the fine garden city of Oldenburg, on the west coast, that Hindenburg commanded his regiment for three years, far away from the centre of military affairs. True, it was the seat of a Grand Ducal Court and the scene accordingly of a great deal of ceremony, which failed altogether to appeal to him. Nevertheless life at the minor courts in those days was still very simple and patriarchal, and our colonel found his duties of supervision delightfully pleasant and easy.

Shortly before his fiftieth birthday he was promoted major-general and appointed Chief of the Staff of the 8th Army Corps at Coblenz. The transition from the hardy north to the mild climate of the Rhineland was not an easy one. It took him time, as he himself confessed, to get

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accustomed to "the more frivolous attitude towards serious problems" and the "softer and more impressionable temperament" of the breed which inhabited that part of the country. The antagonism aroused in his eastern nature by this morally and intellectually easy-going race proved insurmountable. He was unable, however, to resist the charm of the Rhineland, which the river has never failed to exercise upon those who dwell upon its banks.

The General Officer under whom he was serving was the hereditary Grand Duke of Baden. The two men were mutually attracted by a certain similarity of nature. The atmosphere of the Court at Karlsruhe too was fundamentally patriarchal. The son-in-law of the old Emperor, who reigned in the capital of Baden, was the embodiment of the kingly virtues of an era that was now coming to an end.

At the beginning of the new century, thanks to the intervention of the Grand Ducal family, he was appointed to the command of a division at Karlsruhe. Never before had he exercised command over all three arms of the service. The newly created lieutenant-general, whose rank carried with it the title of Excellency, lived on terms of friendship with the homely Court, and it was more than etiquette which prompted him subsequently to speak of the kindness and graciousness with which "I and my wife also were treated and which we so much appreciated."

The year 1902 was temporarily overclouded by the death of his father, who died at the age of eighty-six. Happy the man to whom it is given to accompany a faithful son thus far on a brilliant career. Surely the blessing of God must rest upon a family, the heads of which, one after the other, live to a biblical age to rejoice the hearts of their descendants.

Promotion now came quickly. At the age of fifty-five he was appointed to the command of the 4th Army Corps

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at Magdeburg. His authority was now of almost unlimited extent. A thousand officers or more were serving under him whose fate was in his hands. Their promotion, or, in the event of idleness or incapacity, their removal from the army depended entirely upon his verdict. He insistently urged that courageous initiative was of more consequence than mental subtlety. He always loathed sarcasm and chicanery of any kind, and when censure was inevitable he clothed it in words which left no sting behind them.

A sense of proportion was a quality that he possessed in an unequalled degree. If, as occasionally happened, owing to wrong information he did anyone an injustice, he always made amends quite frankly to the lowest as well as to the highest. His constant aim was to discover the real nature that lay beneath the uniforms of his subordinates, a task which is much more difficult in military than civilian life owing to the formalities by which it is surrounded. He never failed at once to distinguish essentials from non-essentials, and no one could lead him astray on a false scent.

Above all he possessed the rare gift of being a really good listener, a quality that was one of the most fortunate possessions of the old Emperor, whereas the latter's grandson and his contemporaries with few exceptions were more concerned to listen to themselves. Twice a week the staff of the Corps assembled at the office of the G.O.C. Hindenburg would place his watch on the table, and if anyone digressed from the point or laboured the obvious he would at once cast a meaning glance at the dial in front of him.

He was fond of talking about the "soul of the man in the ranks" and ever sought to understand the point of view of the average soldier, which the officers of the later Wilhelminian era were to neglect unduly. He never looked upon the rank and file as raw material to be ruthlessly

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worked up into a state of efficiency. Nor did he allow the men in their off-time to be worried merely in the interests of smartness. Did his battalions, for instance, return dog-tired to barracks after a long field day, he would go the length of cancelling church parade ; better, he considered, that the men should rest quietly than go to sleep in church.

Throughout his career he has always attached particular importance to clarity and terseness of expression. His style has become more concise with advancing age. Flowery phrases are his pet aversion. His sentences are less remarkable for originality of thought than for common sense and purity of language. We ought always to endeavour, he tells us, to express our ideas on paper exactly as we conceive them. This great gift, which is the secret of all good writing, may be said to have come naturally to him. It is his dislike for ambiguity that makes him attach so much importance to clearness of construction.

He is an unremitting foe of false punctuation, which he considers the sign of a lack of organising capacity and unpardonable above all in an officer who holds a responsible position. Anyone guilty of careless writing or faulty construction he at once suspects of being a scatterbrain. He reminds us that an action was once lost by the wrong insertion of a simple comma in operation orders. Even in his old age he always corrects any mistakes in typewritten documents that are submitted to him, puts the commas in the right places and inserts the full stops. In doing so he is not actuated by a spirit of philological pedantry, but by his long experience of affairs, which has taught him the importance of avoiding any cause of possible error.

His public appearances are marked by a complete absence of meretriciousness. If he has to make a speech he avoids oratorical exuberance, which is becoming increasingly the fashion on ceremonial occasions. His voice is harsh, his

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delivery slow and somewhat awkward ; he has a tendency to over-accentuate the point he wishes to make, a defect which is due to his anxiety to make his meaning absolutely clear. He never indulges in abuse, or roars at his audience as if he were on the barrack square. His very intervention has a calming effect upon excited disputants. In giving orders he never exhibits the haste begotten of inefficiency nor the hesitation caused by uncertainty, and in critical situations during manœuvres he constantly exhibited a composure which is less a form of severe self-control than the outcome of a spirit which is at one with itself.

The secret of all this was his invulnerable nerves, a secret which for a long time was only known to those who came into immediate contact with him, but which was to be discovered one day by a nation in its distress. What perhaps originally was merely a fortunate coldness of temperament gradually instilled healing power into the ever-increasing number of those who looked to this impulsive leader to heal their internal discords.

This protective attitude of calm watchfulness can only be maintained by the use of the simplest and best of tonics —sleep. Only he who sleeps well and can fall asleep at will at odd moments can come fresh to his daily work and retain his mental equilibrium unimpaired. When General von Hindenburg was travelling about on a tour of inspection, he would say to his Staff on getting into the train : “ Now let us spend a few moments thinking about our duties,” and at once go to sleep. When, however, he woke up shortly before his arrival he was all on the spot.

The husbanding of nervous energy caused by such an economy of expenditure of vital forces is a guarantee of longevity. Sleep preserves the intellectual faculties and confers the sovereign gift of wisdom. Those nervy walkers in their sleep, whose life is one perpetual struggle with

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exhaustion, either never get beyond fussiness or are incapable of continuity of effort. The faculty of relaxing at will eventually enables its possessor to bear the greatest burdens.

Hindenburg has always been remarkable for his marvellous memory, which he has retained even in extreme old age. He can unerringly recall people who only exchanged a few words with him many decades ago. It is not a fiction, but literally true, that he remembers details of the lives of thousands of his former comrades. At solemn receptions he habitually astonishes and delights the most insignificant individuals by explaining to them exactly when and where he met them previously. He also possesses the gift of being able to make some personal and distinctive remark to each one of the crowd of official hand-shakers as they pass by, and accordingly has no need to have recourse to empty formulae such as "Very pleased to see you," and indeed never does so.

All those who witnessed his work at Magdeburg agree in their estimate of the man who as yet was far from being a public figure. Even then, however, they were loud in their praises of the unusual constructive qualities of this general whose individuality was so very different from that of the average occupant of such a post. Testimony of this kind, dating as it does from the days before he had obtained national or international celebrity, is particularly helpful in enabling us to find out how he impressed those who met him.

As far as could be seen, Hindenburg's career as a soldier would terminate at the expiration of his term as Commander of an Army Corps, and he would then have to retire into private life. Can we be surprised that one whose faculties were still unimpaired should have been consumed with the desire to show what he could really do ? From

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the point of view of origin, convictions and experience, his lifework was in process of consummation. There he stood in the prime of life on the highest rung of the ladder to which he had climbed with the regularity we might expect of a favoured but efficient child of fortune. A last opportunity was now afforded him in the final stages of his long career of proving himself the man he had aimed to be.

Eight years elapsed during which he enjoyed the dignities and fulfilled the duties inherent in his important command : then at the age of sixty-four, of his own accord, he pronounced the *Satis est* and applied to be placed on retired pay.

In the course of his professional travels through Prussia and the New Empire from Königsberg to Oldenburg, from the Polish frontier to Coblenz and Karlsruhe, he had come into contact with nearly every race and tribe of which our nation is composed. Europe was still the Europe of the Congress of Vienna when his military career began, the mighty forces within the German Empire were still vigorously expanding when it ended. From the days of Bismarck's early greatness to the latter days of the untimely Bethmann-Hollweg he had mounted guard over his smaller and greater Fatherland faithfully and simply, without exceeding the traditional limits set to the activities of one of a chosen band of officers. None but the experts were aware of the real value of this brave and honest general, whose name occurred more frequently in the army lists than in the newspapers.

*Satis est.*

He found it easy enough to reconcile himself to the loss of position and influence. "There was no war in prospect and I recognised it to be my duty to give my juniors a chance." He felt himself not to be indispensable. Here, indeed, was true modesty ! How many, we wonder, of

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those whom fate and their own merits had thus exalted would have been capable of such self-discipline on the threshold of old age. He was anxious that there should be no doubt as to the motives which actuated him. "A great deal of nonsense," he writes, "has been talked in connection with this very unimportant event. I declare most emphatically that the step in question was due to no friction, official or otherwise, of any sort whatever."

His object in saying so, it may be inferred, was to refute the rumours which were circulated subsequently that the Emperor had got rid of him because he could not put up with a man of Hindenburg's character among his generals, and would only have his own creatures about him. No doubt the wave of Caesarism that was sweeping through the country from Berlin made his retirement easier for him. He was too loyal and too much of a gentleman, however, to show that he was affected in the smallest degree by secret differences of this kind. He was the more annoyed at the discussion of the incident in public, as he felt instinctively that to harbour feelings of resentment of this kind was incompatible with his loyalty.

On the 18th of March his son, who was serving as a second-lieutenant in his father's old regiment in Berlin, received the following laconic postcard from his father : "Just retired ; retained *à la suite* of the Third Regiment of Footguards ; H.M. has just most graciously conferred upon me the exalted Order of the Black Eagle. Do thou likewise. Heartiest greetings. Dad."

He made no attempt, did this fine old soldier, to conceal his pride at receiving the Grand Eagle and thereby becoming a Grandee of Prussia as the just reward of his deserts : and yet he conveyed his satisfaction and his exhortation to his son and heir in a few lines scribbled on the front of a postcard !

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The latter was just about to present himself for his entrance examination to the Staff College ; it seemed as if the next generation was to follow in the paternal footsteps. His ‘ pater,’ however, had no great opinion of all the knowledge with which they were stuffed. “ You will be glad,” he wrote, “ when you’ve done with all this drudgery.” At the same time he taught him good sound military doctrine. “ We are not made officers, moreover, to ride the high horse as regards the rank and file.” Do we not seem to catch a hint of warning in this against the theatrical extravagances which were then being encouraged by the very highest in the land ?

In his choice of a permanent home he was naturally influenced by the memories of the happy days spent by him when a subaltern at Hanover. The beauty and the bracing atmosphere of this forest-girt town, which had long since been reconciled to its incorporation with Prussia, had made it a favourite resort for retired officers. Hindenburg and his family took a flat in a quiet suburb near the leafy avenues of the Eilenriede and settled down to a pleasantly comfortable bourgeois existence. The parents found distraction in the happiness of their children : not only the son, but the daughters as well were leaving them. The elder had already married Subprefect von Brockhusen, and the younger was engaged to Lieutenant von Pentz, who was quartered at Lüneburg : and the expense of her trousseau was an all-absorbing question for the mistress of the household.

His correspondence with his son in the autumn of 1912 is full of military references to the Balkan War. “ Let us hope,” he writes, “ that only the Turkish advanced troops will be engaged between Kirk Kilisse and Adrianople, and that the main body will put in an appearance later on. But where ? you will ask. Either halfway between Adrian-

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ople and Constantinople with its back to the latter—on the assumption that it is going to stand upon the defensive. Otherwise south of Constantinople with its left wing resting on the Maritza." His sympathies were avowedly pro-Turkish, as will be readily understood in view of the fact that ever since the days of Captain von Moltke, the victor of the wars of Hindenburg's youth, Prussian military instructors had been entrusted with the task of rendering the Turkish army efficient. Very possibly, too, he was disappointed at the failure of the leaders produced by the decadent Empire of Turkey to correspond to the expectations that had been formed of them.

That the father did not expect the subaltern in Berlin to be unduly interested in "the international squabbling that was going on far away in Turkey" is evident from the chaffing remark with which he concludes one of his letters on strategy. "You've probably bought a shilling map, if not you'll find one in the mess." The long-drawn suspense of war was as yet unknown to the world.

The first few years of retirement were spent in an atmosphere of pleasant monotony, a monotony that was only occasionally interrupted by a change of scenery. Every now and then Hindenburg would extend the range of his wanderings, and make excursions to foreign countries which hitherto he had only seen from the point of view of a conquering invader. He was tremendously impressed by the superhuman character of the Roman remains in the Eternal City, but was less attracted by the monuments of the Italian Renaissance. Unfortunately while in Italy his health, as on several previous occasions, gave some cause for anxiety. Work would have suited him better, but, as he once wrote, one can't have everything.

Three years of the autumn of his life thus passed in peace and happy freedom from anxiety. All this time he lived

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a life of strict privacy, never indulging in reflections upon military affairs outside the circle of his immediate acquaintances, however much his old professional keenness might prompt him to do so. In any case he successfully withheld the temptation of so many retired officers to play the part of political amateurs whose appearances in public and misdirected enthusiasm as prominent members of patriotic societies were so injurious to the public interest. Far away from party cheers and calumny his life remained a blank sheet to be filled by the history of the nation whose fortunes he was so suddenly and decisively to influence.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LAUREL-CROWNED GENERAL

THE shots of Sarajevo echoed and re-echoed throughout a continent that was a military and political powder-mine. For a generation and a half none of the great European Powers had engaged in war with one another at home. And yet for some time past mankind had been subconsciously oppressed by the menace of a war of coalitions in the Occident.

The hopes so often and emphatically proclaimed that peace would be preserved were only uttered for the purpose of allaying public anxiety. Sooner or later war was bound to come. Such was the universal feeling whenever a crisis arose.

Europe was a volcano whose yet extinct crater was covered by a polished floor of diplomatic marquetry on which alliances were devised and practised as though they were dance steps. Competition was daily becoming more serious, and clever intrigues were rife. Instead of adhering resolutely to reliable methods Germany had too many irons in the fire, and had dissipated her energy in the pursuit of contradictory aims. Decadent Austria and the unreliable Italian pickpockets were her only friends. The British Empire that once had coquetted with us had been committed long since to the French and Russians, whose aim was to overthrow their harnessed adversary.

Were they really in earnest? Two years before the

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catastrophe took place the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaievitch had proposed the following toast at a dinner given to some French officers : “ I drink to our common victories in the future. *Au revoir in Berlin.*” Unfortunately such sentiments were not merely the product of too much champagne—Europe was perpetually indulging in draughts of jingoism, and when after a long sitting the principals turned quarrelsome they called the subject of dispute a “ question of life and death ” and flourished their swords.

The Austrians, the weakest of the Great Powers, were just as bad as their Russian adversaries. Germany, apart from one or two strong-man exhibitions, was more or less peaceably inclined ; for she recognised the political disadvantages of her position and that even her magnificent army could not possibly contend with her enemies on such unequal terms. Only the Pan-Germans were in favour of a preventive war. Wise folk clearly saw that the stock of common sense would not suffice to avert a catastrophe in the event of some huge political explosion.

On the 28th of June, 1914, the heir to the thrones of Austria and Hungary was murdered by a gang of Serbian conspirators. Serbia declined any responsibility in the matter and Austria determined to deal with her drastically. Belgrade, however, was backed by St. Petersburg. Several weeks of misrepresentation ensued during which the Great Powers, one after another, charged and discharged their electric currents into the atmosphere.

Suddenly the storm burst far away down on the Danube. If Russia was to hurl herself upon Austria the would-be conqueror Nicolaievitch would find Germany in his path : if that were so France would be involved, and with France Belgium, and England would be compelled to intervene. “ *Au revoir in Berlin* ” Nicolaievitch had exclaimed in his cups—his chance had now come of making his words good.

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Russia assumed the responsibility for the World War and the Grand Duke's march began.

The man who was to bar his progress and annihilate him in Russia was leading a modest existence as a pensioner in Hanover. So little did the Russian Commander-in-Chief know about Hindenburg, that when he was opposed by this old Prussian General he had to consult an army list in order to find out who he was.

It was a bewildered world that was overtaken by war. Many decades must elapse before we can discover how things came to such a pass. Everyone at the time looked upon his neighbour as solely responsible and as a criminal who had ignored the rules of the game as prescribed by international law. Victory had to be won, for victory would prove the justice of the cause. Prayers were offered up by every Church in every language. O Lord God, if our cause is just, do Thou destroy the enemy. God was not asked to take sides with the majority but to help the peacemakers against their assailants. Thus prayed they all in reliance on their clear consciences. Even the nations which assumed the offensive claimed to be only doing so in self-defence.

Germany obviously could hardly win the war and save herself except by a rapid and sweeping advance into France. Everyone by this time realised that this gigantic blaze was not to be extinguished by the water of belated reason. No sacrifice could be too great, this was no war of Governments, although the secret chancelleries had helped to bring it about by their lack of circumspection and their fatalistic attitude with regard to it. It wasn't a matter of professional soldiers or even for volunteers. It was nation against nation, everyone had to go ; anyone incapable of bearing arms had to do war service at home.

It is only natural under such circumstances that a mili-

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tary leader should have looked upon his orders as the supreme law of the land, provided he did not disregard essentials and that events took place too quickly for politicians to have a say in them. The scale, however, seemed too vast and the dangers too omnipresent. No one was ready in the month of August to assume the leadership of the whole nation. Four days after the outbreak of the war the Chancellor was wandering about in a mental fog, and four weeks later the General Staff lost its head. Amid the enthusiasm aroused by a rapid succession of brilliant feats of arms people forgot to ask themselves the all-important question, "Where is the leader?" Our officials were as expert as could be desired, but we lacked someone who could really lead us. The man who could have filled the part, who was called upon to do so when it was too late, was still walking about in a grey summer suit in the suburbs of a provincial town.

Why should he, Hindenburg, a general on retired pay, have been called upon? Was he really cast in a superior mould? Could not the others who were still active members of their profession have done as well if not better than he? What could this old soldier possibly know about international politics? Less than an *attaché*! And legal technicalities, decrees and civil administration? Less than a crown prosecutor. Politics and civil administration, however, had to give way for the moment to the necessity of gaining a speedy and final victory. Upon this assumption, and this assumption only, the tactless acts and speeches and the faulty judicial and economic measures of the first few weeks could be condoned. The main victory would justify what had been done and put a different aspect on illegalities and follies.

A war dictator was needed in August 1914, but not in August 1916. This is the tragedy of the war as regards

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both Germany and Hindenburg. In the summer of 1914 our fate depended upon the solution of only one concrete problem ; how to gain the decisive victory after the great advance. Everything else was of secondary importance. A superman was not needed as dictator ; the problems of international law, of bread supplies and of annexations had not yet arisen, and Liebknecht had not yet begun his revolutionary activities.

Two years later our affairs had assumed an entirely different aspect, and had become far more complicated : it was too late for one man or even two to take a comprehensive view of the huge range of questions that had to be dealt with. It was impossible to eliminate the political factor for so lengthy a period, let alone organise the internal administration without advisory committees representative of the various interests. The result was a hundred simultaneous crises. The war could no longer be conducted in complete disregard of the countless under-currents of national and European opinion, and new problems were springing up daily, like sparks from hidden fires. Even the war had split up into sectors, some of which lay far beyond the confines of Europe.

Germany's will and brains were concentrated during August at G.H.Q. at Coblenz. Fond though he was of gaining battles at manœuvres, the Emperor would not lead. He was very well advised in this respect, for he was not the strong man he had pretended to be in peace time. Did he realise that he could not be more than a figurehead when it came to business ? It is a question which will never be answered. Probably he dimly suspected as much when things were going badly ; he never, however, drew the logical conclusions even as regards the war.

The army was again commanded by a Moltke, the heir to the name but not to the qualities of calmness, discern-

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ment and energy to which William I owed his victories. This Moltke II of William II was described subsequently by General Groener, the ablest of the critics who were associated with the conduct of the war in its final stages, as the "Commander against his will." And indeed he was no less averse from directing the military operations than was the Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg from assuming seriously the reins of government at home.

It was the fatality of this Emperor that he could never tolerate those who really had the will to act, and gave the preference to men who, for all their learned and fine talk, had never been brought up to accept responsibility. The Emperor is said to have exclaimed a day or two after the outbreak of war : "What we want now is a man of genius!" We very much doubt it. And above all, what is and what constitutes a genius for action ? Posterity presupposes results, and its retrospective knowledge of the sequence of events impairs the value of its judgment as to the nature and the development of the man himself.

The future hero necessarily appears very different from his colleagues who are working with him in the same room. Those who stand out conspicuously from their fellow-men by virtue of their gifts of mind and body are as often as not bluffers. Caesar's flashing eyes and brow, lit up by the soul within him, are only to be met with in second-rate novels.

A general who possessed Hindenburg's qualities would have been quite adequate as a leader in August 1914, and would have secured imperishable renown. It was essential, however, for him to possess these after all not very startling qualities. Moltke no doubt had read and reflected more and was a better piano player, but he lacked what was needed.

What is it then which transmutes talent into executive genius ? It is nervous imperturbability, a quality which, psychologically speaking, grips the faculties and

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holds them together. The latter of course must be up to a certain standard, and have been developed by a long course of training. The aspirant to a successful leadership must not only have a thorough knowledge of staff duties, but must know by experience what can and cannot be expected of his troops. Acquired knowledge and experience must be supplemented by natural strategical skill—a rare but by no means unique gift.

Finally, and to crown all, he must possess nerves that are equal to any strain, otherwise he cannot accomplish great things.

Clausewitz means the same thing when he requires his general to possess "an audacity controlled by a predominating intelligence. The more his intelligence is stimulated by audacity the more comprehensive will his grasp be and the better results will he achieve, provided he bear in mind always that his commitments will increase proportionately to the scope of his plans." This is the solution of the riddle and the source of all the fairy tales about generalship that may be invented hereafter.

It is only when conditions are literally hopeless that the best of nerves are of no avail. Nothing for instance could have enabled Hindenburg to hold the western front in September 1918.

A general in command of troops may be compelled in the course of an action to condense the creative work of a lifetime into a few hours. The loss of nervous energy that takes place during the hours before and after a battle is incomparably greater than that entailed by any other feat of human endurance, even though compressed into a much shorter period of time.

Intelligence, circumspection, a sense of perspective, audacity, self-control, quickness of comprehension, stern resolution and accuracy in giving orders, rigidity and

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elasticity as regards the choice of means and the end to be attained : all these qualities and more besides must be exercised simultaneously, not merely in juxtaposition or separately, but blended into the synthetic and creative whole, which makes the great leader and alone besuits him to carry out his great mission. A human being can only effect this if he possess an unusual reserve of nervous energy which under ordinary circumstances is hardly likely to be noticed as very exceptional.

What importance again is to be attributed to the plan of the campaign, the strategical design of a battle of nations, the outlines of which must have been prepared and have been constantly present in the mind of the Commander-in-Chief for some considerable time ? Modern strategy, in other words the transport of an army several millions strong for a distance of thousands of kilometres to the front, where the collision between the armed nations of the world is to take place, is not one man's job or effected merely by some brilliant inspiration. A great many experts are engaged in working out the preliminary plans of an operation of this kind that is based not upon the arbitrary conceptions of the Commander-in-Chief, but upon military considerations which take into account all the developments of the art of war, the latest technical achievements and the extent of the area within which the operations are to be carried out.

Owing to the stability of modern alliances, both friendly and otherwise, the direction in which the troops would have to face in the next war could be foretold without any difficulty. Germany would have to carry on a war on two fronts. That she would have to assume the offensive with all her available forces against France and stand on the defensive against Russia was obvious to the future Commander-in-Chief.

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The whole plan of the campaign down to the smallest detail had been worked out partly by Count Schlieffen, the Chief of the General Staff in person, and partly in accordance with his instructions. It had been tried out again and again, with ever-increasing care both at manœuvres and at the war-game on the map. Schlieffen's plan has been termed a work of genius, an expression which can hardly be applied to the work of so many hands. In any case it was undoubtedly a masterpiece and even now compels the admiration of those who study it.

Accordingly when mobilisation took place the German Commander-in-Chief found everything prepared which a Caesar or Napoleon would have still had to create for himself. On the other hand, however, the demands made upon his reserves of nervous energy were very much greater. One faulty connection at the biological centre of his will-power and all might be lost. A general of superabundant talent or even of genius was less certain to fulfil this task than a man of naturally strong character, of normal endowments, but of imperturbable reliability.

Executive genius in the army is nowadays cramped by such masses of facts, and so dependent upon a very intricate machinery, that it cannot go forth to conquer after the fashion of the late Alexander the Great. The last thing, therefore, that we required in 1914 was what William II rather schoolboyishly defined as 'a genius.' What was wanted was someone who could carry out Schlieffen's plans and not know better or try to go one better at the last minute. What was not wanted was a man who the moment there was a hitch gave orders which only created confusion. This is exactly what Moltke did in those September days, when he wrecked Schlieffen's plan either directly or indirectly, although some time was to elapse before the nation realised the terrible harm that had been done.

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Hindenburg's military leadership affords several convincing proofs of the possession by him of just those faculties which were needed but lacking at G.H.Q. in 1914. Calm, determined, undemonstrative characters of this stamp, however, are the very people whose real value in a crowd almost defies detection. After all, there were several hundred generals on half-pay scattered about the country. Why should this worthy old Excellency have been selected rather than another?

He had never pushed himself forward, and his name was never mentioned when the question of the leadership in war was being discussed. The important appointments had been filled up and, as far as could be seen, in a satisfactory manner. All that was needed was to carry on Schlieffen's good work.

Hindenburg, who was then in Hanover, had offered his services like every other retired officer. He was not, however, in a state of feverish anxiety as to whether employment would come his way immediately. He described his feelings subsequently as follows : "I wondered whether my Emperor and King would require my services. No hint whatever of the kind had reached me during the last twelve months. There seemed plenty of younger talent available. I therefore bowed to the inevitable, although I could not help longing to receive a call."

On the morning of Saturday the 22nd of August Hindenburg made some small purchases in the town, and the shopkeeper asked him when he could send the things home. "Give them to me," he replied ; "I've nothing else to do : they don't want me." He went home to lunch, and afterwards sat down to a good read.

As he was reading his wife brought him in a telegram. It was from G.H.Q., and contained an offer of immediate employment. He calmly telegraphed his acceptance.

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Then came a second wire telling him that General Ludendorff was coming to Hanover, and a third appointing him Commander-in-Chief of the 3rd Army. So he was to go back to dear old East Prussia! A fourth telegram then arrived announcing the hour of Ludendorff's arrival in Hanover, and a fifth postponing the same till the early hours of the following morning?

Who was this Ludendorff?

He was a young major-general, who had only recently been in command of a regiment. His record of service on the General Staff, where he had served as head of the operation section, was an excellent one. He had acquired a certain amount of notoriety in peace-time by his attitude towards Moltke with regard to the recent large increase in the army, which he had alleged to be quite useless unless we created three brand new army corps. He used very strong language to his superiors, introduced a disturbing element into the peaceful atmosphere of the Wilhelmstrasse, and stormed and cursed at military gatherings. He was very bent on getting his three army corps, was this Lieutenant-Colonel Erich Ludendorff.

When he found that the Imperial Chancellor was not even going to ask for them, Ludendorff felt that he had had about enough of the stupid slackers in the government offices in Berlin. They in turn were not anxious to have any further dealings with such a headstrong fellow; so he shook the dust of Berlin off his feet and went westwards to Düsseldorf and then to Strasburg, where, as he told a friend who asked him if he didn't want to go back to Berlin, he was nearer to the enemy.

Even in those days it was admitted that he would go very far unless his hotheadedness played him a bad turn. His capacity for work was apparently unlimited, and his keenness was exceptional, even among Prussian officers.

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His inability to adapt himself to a world other than that created by his glorification of the military estate as the one salutary ideal, his attitude towards civilians whom he looked upon as an inferior type of human beings, were characteristic of the prevailing tendencies in North Germany.

The tense expression of his features, which in spite of their fullness looked firm and even clear-cut when viewed in profile, bespoke ability. In spite of his eyeglass and his slightly nasal manner of speaking, he looked anything but a fop. He propounded his ideals and formulae with such abruptness that those who differed from him preferred to keep their opinions to themselves. And yet he lacked Hindenburg's imperturbability and moral poise.

When mobilisation was decreed his first thought was, " If we only had those three army corps," and till the end of the war he always maintained that we should have gained the victory at the outset if ' his ' three army corps had taken part in the advance. As my readers will see, he was a tremendous believer in the machine.

Even if Ludendorff's three corps had been able to intervene, the numbers of trained men would not have differed sensibly from those present in August 1914, though no doubt they would have been differently grouped.

At the outbreak of war he was appointed Deputy-Chief of the General Staff of the 2nd Army, which was commanded by General von Bülow, to which was assigned the honourable task of hurriedly collecting some mixed brigades and making a surprise attack upon the fortress of Liège, with a view to clearing the way for the advance of the armies into Belgium : a task that suited a hotspur like Ludendorff down to the ground, as it gave him a last chance of taking part in the fighting before settling down to office work as a staff officer.

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He had been given no instructions to take part in the fighting at Liège. According to his own account he merely accompanied the troops as an onlooker. As a matter of fact, however, he acted with splendid energy and audacity, and took over the command which was nominally exercised by General von Emmich. Between the roads along which the columns were advancing lay the unconquered forts. The night was dark, and lit up only by the flashes of rifle and gun-fire. It was only at dawn, however, when the commander of the leading brigades had been killed and confusion had begun to spread among the Germans, that Ludendorff intervened. He at once continued the attack, and in a very short time had occupied the heights in front of the old Carthusian monastery of Liège. His demand for the surrender of the town was rejected. The position of the little band during the second night within the rayon of the hostile fortress seemed even more perilous. At day-break our general, who by his own showing was merely an onlooker, launched his troops in extended order to the assault, and the Belgians capitulated as soon as the Germans had crossed the Meuse.

Liège had fallen and the bells were rung in Germany in celebration of the first victory. Ludendorff's star was in the ascendant. Liège had been his Toulon. The Emperor conferred upon him the Order *Pour le Mérite*. He was soon to become a conspicuous figure.

The 22nd of August was approaching, that Saturday which was to be so fateful to certain inhabitants of villadom in Hanover. H.Q. of the 2nd Army was on the outskirts of Namur. At 9 a.m. that morning an aide-de-camp arrived from G.H.Q. and handed the Deputy-Chief of the Staff a letter from the Supreme Command. The letter, which was from Moltke to Ludendorff, read as follows : " You have a hard task in front of you, harder perhaps

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than the taking of Liège.... There is no one besides yourself upon whom I can rely so implicitly. You may be able to save the situation in the east. Do not be angry with me for taking you away from a post perhaps on the eve of a decisive action, which, if God will, will settle the campaign. You must make the sacrifice for your country. Your energy may yet avert the worst."

This is what had happened. The commander of the army in East Prussia was anxious to retire behind the Vistula, whereas G.H.Q. was unwilling to evacuate the province which had been the cradle of the Prussian State. Ludendorff therefore was to go as Chief of the Staff to the north-east. It was an appointment which, to judge by the language used by Moltke in announcing the news, was anything but a promotion. The principal fighting would take place in the west, and no one had a better claim to be present when the historic victory planned by Schlieffen was fought beneath the walls of Paris than Ludendorff who had been the latter's pupil.

At G.H.Q. it was obviously assumed that an ambitious general of his stamp would be disappointed and chagrined at his transfer to this far-distant front. General von Stein, the Quartermaster-General, also made a private appeal to him by letter. "You really must go," he wrote; "reasons of State require it." Whether Ludendorff went willingly is hard to say. He could not have foreseen the future, and believed that the war would be decided in the west. And yet he was going to victory and Moltke to defeat!

The strategist of their choice at once set out on his journey through Liège, Aix-la-Chapelle, up the Rhine to Coblenz. As the car sped on its way through the harvest landscape, Moltke's deputy informed him that General von Hindenburg had been selected as Commander-in-Chief in East Prussia. His whereabouts, however, were

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unknown, he said, and his acceptance even a matter of uncertainty.

So Herr von Hindenburg was to be the new general who was to fight the Russians. Was to be. Who was the original author of the suggestion, who put it forward and finally decided the matter? There were a great many of the advisers of the Emperor in the Castle of Coblenz who subsequently claimed that they had made Hindenburg. As a matter of fact they one and all knew precious little about this sixty-six-year-old gentleman, who was living so quietly in retirement.

Hindenburg, like Ludendorff, was a native of East Prussia, and it would look well if between them they won a victory in their own province. Moreover, as somebody justly remarked, he was entitled by seniority to get the job, and he was reported to have all his wits still about him. Someone then remembered that Hindenburg had been quartered at Königsberg and knew the whole country thoroughly, and that he had always done very well at manœuvres. Nobody, however, looked upon him as a great strategist, so Ludendorff, the new celebrity, was attached to him to keep him up to the mark.

For two hours Ludendorff and Moltke pored over the map of the Eastern theatre of war. The evacuation of the country to the east of the Vistula was not in itself incompatible with Schlieffen's plan, which contemplated the reconquest of the lost territory as soon as the victory had been gained in the west. It was an operation that had been practised hundreds of times in war-games in peace-time.

The reality, however, had turned out to be very different. The Austrians had given way on the main Russian front, and the Russian invasion of East Prussia had inflicted terrible sufferings upon the inhabitants. Moreover, the

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presence of large numbers of fugitives in the interior was having a most depressing effect upon public opinion. Unless something was done it was doubtful whether we could hold the line of the Vistula and relieve the Austrians as well.

Ludendorff agreed with Moltke that the 8th Army must stand and fight where it was in the centre and south of East Prussia. It was one army against two, one man against three, and very possibly against five, the following week. Moreover, owing to the position of their Army of the Nareff on their flank, in consequence of the configuration of the frontier, the Russians were strategically in a naturally advantageous position, whereas the Germans, on their inner lines, ran a great risk of being hemmed in. Nevertheless Ludendorff sent a telegram before he left Coblenz, forbidding any further retreat by the main body of the 8th Army during the next twenty-four hours.

And then—at 9 p.m.—he started in his special train to Hanover to pick up Hindenburg. The two engines with their two carriages in tow, one of which had been fitted up as a map room, roared through the darkness past endless troop trains which were delayed to let them through, till at last in the grey dawn, after seven hours' fast running, they drew up alongside the platform at Hanover.

There, looking very lonely, stood an elderly officer with his wife. What with his black trousers and his loose blouse which wouldn't fasten at the neck, he didn't look as if he were going on active service. It wasn't so easy in those days to get hold of a tailor on a Saturday evening!

Ludendorff jumped out and reported himself officially. Then they shook hands—for the first time in their lives, for they had never met previously. Hindenburg had not even yet heard of Ludendorff's feat at Liège.

The dramatic suddenness of the occasion had been too

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much for his lifelong companion, and she who usually was so cheery could hardly bring herself to utter a word.—A short farewell and he was gone.

While the train sped on its way the two passengers held their first council of war. Ludendorff reported to his Chief whatever information he possessed. The General of the morrow merely knew what was in the newspapers, and they were generally misinformed and often not allowed to tell the whole truth.

At Berlin Frau Margarethe Ludendorff was allowed to get in at the Zoo Station and travel with them, while they lunched, as far as Küstrin. She was a good talker, obviously proud of her husband, but at the same time much upset at losing her home ; for like all the other officers' wives, she had been compelled to leave Strasburg upon mobilisation. Her husband was too absorbed in his task to pay much attention to what she said. Hindenburg, however, did his best to comfort her. At 2 p.m. the red towers of the Marienburg loomed up beyond the Nogat. The sun was burning hot and the offensive spirit of the Teutonic Order seemed to emanate from the sanctuary of German history on the Vistula. Caravans of fugitives were wearily dragging across the bridge. Where were Germany's defenders ?

Their reception at the headquarters of the 8th Army that had retired thither was frosty in the extreme. Even Ludendorff, as he tells us, was struck by it. Hindenburg's predecessor, Colonel-General von Prittwitz, had departed in a rage without awaiting their arrival. He was the first commander of an army to be superseded during the World War, and he felt he had been treated unfairly. Had not he acted in accordance with Schlieffen's plan, had he not held out for weeks, longer indeed than he had been expected to do ? How was East Prussia to be reconquered, if he allowed the 8th Army to be annihilated ? He knew as

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well as anyone the meaning of the word responsibility and that his reputation must be sacrificed, if needs be, to the achievement of the main purpose of the campaign. Prittwitz was quite willing to sacrifice himself on behalf of his comrades on the west, but now he had simply been made a scapegoat.

The officers at H.Q. of the 8th Army were not by any means impressed by Hindenburg and Ludendorff. Lieutenant-Colonel Hoffmann, the G.S.O.1, drew their attention to the grave nature of the situation. Samsonoff's army had five times as many infantry and three times as many artillery as themselves. It was all very well for Coblenz to tell them to risk an action with Samsonoff, but even under the most favourable circumstances, they could not hope to do more than hold their ground.

Rennenkampf, the Commander-in-Chief of the Niemen army, moreover, would not stand by while the Germans repulsed the Russian southern army. He had been instructed, as we had learned from captured orders, to establish contact with it and cut off the Germans. Prittwitz's old officers, in any case, advised them to go slowly and to be contented with fighting on the last natural defensive position beyond the Vistula, where a victory could be reasonably expected.

Hindenburg, however, refused to entertain the idea of a merely defensive success ; he was determined to have his Cannæ. One of his most cherished strategical convictions had always been that the side which held a central position must separate its foes, tackle each in turn, and annihilate the one before attacking the other. His plan was to prepare a Cannæ, not for both Russian armies, but for Samsonoff only ; accordingly, with the hearty concurrence of Ludendorff, he informed his hesitating subordinates that Samsonoff must not merely be defeated but annihilated.

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The latter, in full reliance on Rennenkampf's victory, had pushed forward too far westward, and was marching on Allenstein instead of Johannisburg. He had avoided the forests and lakes of the Masurian district as unsuitable for his troops. Rennenkampf in the meantime was enjoying himself at Insterburg. There was no need to hurry. The new hotel, the Dessauer Hof, was much more comfortable than anything similar in the Russian frontier towns. There was no lack of drink or of dancing partners either ! Why should he worry about the Prussians ? they would soon be taken prisoners. Samsonoff was already on their flanks and he had merely to advance in order to be able to report his triumph to Petrograd.

Hindenburg did not even allow himself a few days to think matters over. His plans for a Cannæ were complete. His first step was to reduce the strength of his centre, which was facing Samsonoff's masses : reduce not weaken as he was careful to state, for his centre was composed of the 20th Corps which was recruited in the district of Allenstein and was therefore defending its own hearths and homes. What better inspiration could be found to hearten troops in spite of their numerical inferiority ? Psychological considerations therefore played a great part in the constitution of his centre.

From the purely military point of view both his flanks were much stronger. His intention was to allow Samsonoff to make a frontal attack on the 20th Corps, which was to occupy as many Russian divisions as possible. The first Corps, which hitherto had been facing Rennenkampf, was transported right across East Prussia to the German right flank and was ordered, as soon as the action began, to advance via Usdau on Neidenburg, and cut off the Russian retreat. Below and Mackensen, who commanded the 1st Reserve Corps and the 17th Corps from Danzig respectively,

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were to form the left wing of the 8th Army, which was to carry out an enveloping movement on a wide front.

Everything was now prepared for the 'crowning mercy' in the south. It was a bold undertaking, for if it failed not only would East Prussia be sacrificed but the German front in Old Prussia would be shattered and the way lie open to Berlin. For troops which had been defeated in such a formation could not, as the more cautious Prittwitz had hoped, be rallied, even behind the Vistula. Hindenburg happened to overhear a conversation between two senior officers, who were discussing this unpleasant eventuality. "Gentlemen," he said, turning round to them, "our arrangements are all so well in hand that we can take it easy to-day." Mental imperturbability such as this was indeed equal to any emergency!

Ludendorff, the tactical expert, saw to it that the troops reached their destinations punctually. He carried the movement order in his head as well as in his pocket. He knew the time tables, both rail and road, almost by heart, and had given instructions that the movements of the troops in the areas of assembly were to be executed regardless of conditions, and were to be completed within two days. Woe unto the battalion that lost its way or arrived late! The troops in question, especially those on the flanks, were fearfully exhausted by the continual fighting, for they were only 210,000 strong and during the last fortnight had been continually fighting successful rearguard actions against 800,000 Russians.

Rennenkampf's army, which was very strong in cavalry, was only opposed by a cavalry division and some Landwehr, a very thin defensive screen, as Hindenburg put it, with which to conceal our weakness. Would Rennenkampf pierce it? That was the question. He, however, was enjoying himself at Insterburg, heedless of the storm

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that was gathering in the south. But what if Samsonoff were to summon him to his assistance?—But there was no time for ‘buts’ and ‘ifs,’ all the German commanders could do was to rely on the blindness of the Russian generals.

Samsonoff promptly fell into the trap. The barrier to his north, the German centre, trembled and writhed beneath the weight of the Russian onslaught. Right in the middle of the German line lay a village called Tannenberg. Did not the very name convey an historical warning? It was there 500 years ago that the German knights were overwhelmed by the Slavonic hordes. A modest monument marked the spot where the German pioneers met their heroic death.

Who can tell what Hindenburg felt at the sight of this lowly and ill-omened memorial? We only know that he turned to his Staff and said quite simply: “We will give the name a new significance, the battle shall be called the battle of Tannenberg.”

The 26th of August was the culminating point of a drama that was being acted on a stage, sixty-three miles long. That day the flanks began to move. General von François, the commander of the 1st Corps, had already begun to threaten the German rear. Samsonoff at once detected the attempt to outflank him, and resisted desperately. On the other flank the enemy fell back before Mackensen and Below, who were marching on Ortelsburg.

Suddenly an airman reported that Rennenkampf’s troops were advancing through Angerburg. Was the left German wing threatened in rear? was Rennenkampf going to intervene? Wouldn’t it be safer under the circumstances to swing back and face the latter and be contented with a half-success against Samsonoff? Someone submitted to Hindenburg that our dispositions should be

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altered accordingly. He declined to do so and decided to abide by his original plan.

A few hours later it turned out that the airman had been deceived by his imagination. Rennenkampf was skirmishing near Königsberg and did nothing to prevent a Cannæ. In the meantime the 20th Corps which formed the centre had abandoned its defensive rôle and assumed the offensive, and established contact with the right wing behind Usdau, beyond the railway line by which Samsonoff's army maintained communication with Mlava and Warsaw.

Samsonoff's main body was surrounded. He could still retire eastwards, but was soon prevented from doing so by the advance of the German left wing.

The battle had reached its crisis on the 26th of August, when the general action really began. The result was already apparent.

Why has Hindenburg been given the credit of the victory, and not Ludendorff ? On the evening of the 26th Ludendorff and other members of the Operations Section had voted for breaking off the action. Part of another Russian army was hurrying up from Mlava in Poland—so at least it was reported. It was the receipt of this intelligence that decided Ludendorff against closing the ring round Samsonoff's army. Had he had his way the old army of the Nareff would have escaped between Neidenburg and Willenberg into the forests on the frontier of Poland, with a much diminished reputation, of course, and with serious losses : the battle, however, would not have been a real Cannæ.

It was Hindenburg who rejected this half-measure, and turned a deaf ear to those who would fain have persuaded him to alter his plans. The events of the next few days justified his decision. Samsonoff ran his head again and again in mad fury against the iron ring which surrounded

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him. It was the fury of despair. On the 29th the ring was closed and reinforced, and a hundred thousand Russians were held fast in a triangular area not much bigger than a Prussian administrative country district, where they struggled in vain against their fate.

Their first instinct was to converge on the centre, where they collided and fought furiously with one another. Only a few columns, which had realised at an early stage the danger which threatened them, escaped through the marshes and woods. The dead lay in heaps all round the edges of the area in which they were confined.

A white-haired general was found dead in the midst of the carnage with a bullet wound in the head. It was Samsonoff, who had committed suicide.

Hindenburg, on the other hand, who but five days previously had been sitting quietly in an armchair at home, had beaten a proud army out of existence. Nay, more, he had proved the saviour of the inhabitants of the east in their dire distress. Strangely enough, both G.H.Q. and the public were slow to realise the historic importance of the victory. The first official announcement of General von Stein, the Quartermaster-General, was by no means couched in an exultant strain. "Our troops," it ran, "in Prussia under the command of Colonel-General von Hindenburg have defeated a Russian army, consisting of five army corps and three cavalry divisions, which had advanced from the Nareff, after three days' fighting, between Gilgenburg and Ortelsburg, and are now pursuing them over the frontier."

It was the first time that the nation and the world at large had heard of Hindenburg; but victories after all were of daily occurrence, and there were so many other generals who were doing well. There was much jubilation and beflagging of houses, Hindenburg was talked about,

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and his portrait appeared in the newspapers and in the shop-windows alongside of those of other army leaders. The public saw a rather surly, puffy face with a very long moustache, which curled downwards to the chin and then turned up again. It was a contemporary photograph, and a bad one at that, with too much moustache and too little of Hindenburg. Day by day, however, his name seemed to acquire an added significance in the eyes of the nation. The number of prisoners and of captured guns was most impressive, but the glorious nature of the victory was only gradually realised.

First of all the number of prisoners was given as 30,000, then as 60,000. By Sedan Day, when the great encirclement of 1870 was celebrated, it had risen to 90,000. Lieutenant von Hindenburg had only played a very small part on the former occasion, but now he had brought it off himself, and, as on that previous September evening, the hymns of Leuthen were sung around the camp fires.

Samsonoff's tragic fate startled the idler Rennenkampf out of his wits. Was Satan allied with the Germans? Where had the army sprung from that had carried out this fearful attack in the south? The 8th Army was in front of him, and he had never lost touch with it. Hindenburg's army must have come from nowhere. He was shocked and horrified at hearing of Samsonoff's suicide. He had visions of being attacked by the army of Tannenberg reinforced by the original army. There was nothing for it but to retire as quickly as possible.

And now the 8th Army, reinforced by the corps from Namur, hurried back by forced marches north-eastwards, whence it had come ten days previously. Rest was out of the question if the victory of Tannenberg was to be exploited. If they could only catch up Rennenkampf beyond the Masurian lakes and surround him in the forests of

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Suvalki on the frontiers of Prussia, Lithuania and Poland ! The army wheeled on a front that was over 100 miles in length.

For three days Rennenkampf was able to continue his retreat. Hindenburg did his best to make him reassume the offensive, and deliberately let him gain some slight advantages in the centre in order to entice him to do so. Rennenkampf, however, was not to be trapped. One Cannæ was enough for the Tsar. By the 9th of September the Russians had evacuated their trenches at Gerdauen, and by the 12th their right wing had reached Suvalki in Russia. That same day Hindenburg occupied Rennenkampf's headquarters at Insterburg.

He has described his visit to the quarters of the general who had been too busy to rescue his brother-officer. One glance at the scenes of the carousals of the man who had so recently been the terror of the army of East Prussia was quite sufficient. "The smell of scent, leather and cigarettes, persistent though it was, could not drown the smell of something much worse."

His remarks were not prompted by sheer malignity : he was far too much of a gentleman for that. Indeed, in his military memoirs he stands up for his adversary, and admits that there was a certain amount of justification from the military point of view for his hesitating attitude. We are reminded *à propos* of Insterburg of a rather funny story in connection with the German leader. On the 11th of September 1915, exactly a year later, he was motoring through the town on the Inster. His car was not admitted, and he had to go round because a service of thanksgiving was being held in the market-place in celebration of the liberation of the town by Hindenburg. Not once, but many times since those days has he retailed this anecdote to his familiars as a proof of the transience of glory.

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By the middle of September the whole of East Prussia was clear of the Russians. Rennenkampf indeed had only just managed to escape along the road from Eydtkuhnen to Kovno before he was cut off by the Germans. The withdrawal of the vanquished enemy resembled a flight rather than a retreat, and they left behind prisoners amounting to the strength of an army corps and the greater part of their baggage.

The work of liberation was now complete and with it the success of the 8th Army. Imperial H.Q. at last thought fit to make a great deal of fuss about the good tidings from East Prussia, apart from East Prussia which naturally worshipped Hindenburg the conqueror of the Russians. Not only was the new German hero worshipped in East Prussia, where he was looked upon as a heaven-sent saviour, but his feat of arms was hailed with enthusiasm throughout the whole of Germany, an enthusiasm which was artificially fostered by official propaganda and helped wonderfully to restore the national confidence. The Masurian and Lithuanian theatre of war was invested with a halo by every faithful adherent of German civilisation.

The effect of these fireworks upon the public corresponded to official expectations. The prospects, indeed, upon all the other main fronts were gloomy enough : though even the semi-initiated did not really appreciate how serious they were.

Germany was said to have lost a great battle on the Marne. Official reports spoke of 'regrouping' and of 'shortening a portion of the front by means of a withdrawal to stronger positions.' Was all this merely said in extenuation of a decisive defeat ? Judging by appearances, the retreat had been accomplished in an orderly manner. The western front had been restored ; so it was

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apparently nothing more than a pause in the operations ; after all, one couldn't expect victory after victory.

Was it the pause before the final overthrow of France ? No, that was a long way off now. As for Schlieffen's plan, it had been wholly and irremediably upset, and Moltke himself was at his wits' end, and his capacity to command was exhausted. The "General against his will" had failed, and the war in future was to be one long improvisation. Up to the day of his death Schlieffen had never ceased repeating : " See that the right wing is strong enough." He had planned another battle of Leuthen and to envelop one hostile flank. He had not enough troops available to carry out a vast enveloping movement on both flanks and make the whole of France a Cannæ. Moltke was to be a 'strategical assistant' and nothing more. For the 'elements of victory,' consisting of overwhelming superiority of numbers and rapidity of movement, were contained in the offensive of the right wing.

The Commander-in-Chief, however, lacked the moral courage of Hindenburg. He was too inconstant and unduly liable to be affected by sudden impressions. He lacked the mental detachment which alone enables its possessor to pierce the fog of uncertainty. Moltke had almost laid hands on the laurel wreath of the victor at the beginning of September, but his heart had failed him at that critical juncture. At Coblenz and then at Luxembourg he sat absorbed in gloomy reflections. By the 4th of September he was convinced that the enveloping movement from the north, the fundamental idea upon which the battle in the west was based, had failed. Why had he apparently not enough forces available to surround Paris immediately ? It was because he had reinforced the 6th and 7th Armies in the south, with a view to breaking through with his left wing between Toul and Epinal. The

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preconceived plan of the campaign was entirely upset when the offensive mission was entrusted to the other wing and the reserves were employed in Lorraine.

Gradually a gap opened between the 1st and 2nd Armies which, in spite of the violent flank attacks of a new French army, were still advancing. Moltke lost his head and sent a lieutenant-colonel to Bülow, who was in command of the 2nd Army, and to Kluck, who commanded the 1st. This General Staff officer, when he got to the front, was to give orders for a retreat if he thought fit to do so. What a conception of generalship, to entrust one's best trump card to the first staff officer who happened to be at hand ! The latter naturally made a more timorous use of his authority than even Moltke with all his muddle-headedness had intended. Kluck, military experts tell us, should have put the mischievous envoy from G.H.Q. under arrest, have reported by wireless more favourably on the situation in the latter's name, and allowed the right wing to continue its victorious advance.

But how could a subordinate leader have made such a tremendous decision in view of the lack of determination, the helplessness and pessimism of the Commander-in-Chief ? Hindenburg himself would not have done so, he has since assured us publicly, had he been similarly situated. Might not the Commander-in-Chief have a sufficiently comprehensive grasp of the operations as a whole to justify his abandoning the principal strategical objective of the war ? Who in those circumstances would lightly undertake to challenge fate, and perhaps incur the sole responsibility for disaster ?

No, if anyone was guilty (if such an historically indefensible expression can be used) it was Moltke alone. Just as Kluck felt that victory was within his grasp, he was told that the next army, in spite of relaxation of pressure on

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the part of the adversary, was about to retire in obedience to the orders it had received from Luxembourg. He accordingly followed suit, though with the utmost reluctance, and ordered his troops to cease their pursuit of the English.

Paris was safe ! The Marne was the turning point of the war. Joffre and Gallieni, the Commander-in-Chief and the Governor of Paris, were the French Hindenburg and Ludendorff. True they had not annihilated any German armies, but the ulterior consequences of their feat were to be very different from those of Tannenberg. Moltke though still alive was played out. Not only had the bold imitation of Cannæ and Schlieffen's Leuthen been a failure, but Germany had lost her chance of winning the war. Our western front became a line of earthworks, from which the troops issued from time to time to the attack without any serious prospect of breaking through. The war might now last for years. "Hold out" became the watchword.

In her disappointment Germany turned eastwards, hoping she would find encouragement and salvation in that quarter. A brilliant beginning had been made. The nation longed for a soldier who would act as its tutelary divinity. Our commanders in the west had dug themselves into the chalk and the marshes of that bloodstained country, but not into the hearts of the people.

Hindenburg was on guard out there on the Slavonic-German plain. He was the fellow ! This belief, amounting almost to a spiritual certainty, of the hard-pressed German community increased the prestige of their saviour. Honours, honorary degrees, military distinctions, the Emperor's letters, the laudatory or grateful speeches of prominent officials, were all very well ; but it was not from them that the name of Hindenburg derived its new significance. The nation psychologically speaking was in need of a living

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symbol to whom it could look as its guiding-star in those troublous and uncertain times. Ludendorff for the present was merely a very eminent military expert, whereas Colonel-General von Hindenburg was already "our Hindenburg."

In the meantime fate had overtaken the Austrians. Conrad von Hötzendorf's childish scheme of operations had broken down and his armies were engaged in a hurried retreat. Galicia was lost, and how long would it be before the Russians were in Hungary ? In that case a very few weeks would see the end of the Hapsburg armies. It was a case of "Hindenburg to the rescue ! "

## CHAPTER VI

### COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF IN THE EAST

MOLTKE's successor, Falkenhayn, regarded the operations of war from the point of view of a chief accountant. He would examine minutely our available resources, deal with plans on a strictly arithmetical basis, and veto any proposals which entailed risks that were at all commensurate with our prospective gains. He considered it preferable for us to maintain our ground than to dare greatly in order to bring about a decision. He was no believer in the Cannæ theory, at any rate not while Central Europe was being besieged: violent and surprise sorties were all that he would agree to.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff's proposals for an advance upon Warsaw from south-east Prussia were negatived by Falkenhayn as being on too large a scale and as a too indirect means of relieving the Austrians, who required more immediate help. The Commander-in-Chief also refused his consent to an advance from Posen into northern Poland as he was anxious to effect a junction between the German Army of the east and the hard-pressed Austro-Hungarian forces. Operations in south Poland accordingly were to be in the nature of a surprise attack and nothing more.

By the end of September the men of Tannenberg were assembled in Upper Silesia, 250 miles further south, in readiness for the attack. The few divisions which were

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retained in the north in front of Kovno and Grodno formed the old 8th Army. Hindenburg's army in Silesia had become the 9th Army, he himself being appointed Commander-in-Chief of the German armies in the east.

Conrad von Hötzendorf, however, was inclined to set an undue estimate on the value both of his army and his strategic inspirations and insisted on retaining a free hand. His pride as an Austrian and a soldier forbade him to do otherwise. Well, there was no objection to this, provided the Austrians forged ahead. But they soon came to a standstill again.

Hindenburg's troops on the other hand progressed marvellously, and within ten days had reached the forts outside Warsaw. Unfortunately the Austrians had not kept pace with them and had left a gap between them and the Germans. Hindenburg consequently was unable to remain where he was, let alone outflank the Russians, and he had to retire along roads which the weather had converted into a sea of mud. His retreat was as masterly as his advance : so much so indeed, that the troops were inclined to regard their withdrawal, unaccompanied as it was by any casualties, as a concentration for another blow.

Ludendorff went to Berlin to talk matters over with Falkenhayn, who was full of his idea of a battle at Ypres. The discussion was not at all a satisfactory one. Falkenhayn was not inclined to think very much of the decisive operations that were contemplated in the east. He finally, however, agreed to allot some troops to Hindenburg whose immediate purpose was to straighten out the Grand Duke's front in northern Poland. The operation was a brilliant success : the 9th Army, after a series of heavy engagements between Thorn and the Warthe, advanced upon Lodz, which fell at the beginning of September. The Russian steam-roller that was to flatten out Silesia was put out of

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action ; the Grand Duke had lost a quarter of a million men in six weeks, and incurred the serious annoyance of the Allies.

Winter had now come on and the country was shrouded in a pall of snow which effectually put a stop to operations. The Grand Duke, however, had to go on in obedience to the behests of the Entente. He evolved a plan worthy of an Asiatic despot. He would invade Hungary in January through the icebound passes of the Carpathians, draw the Germans southward, and simultaneously advance through East Prussia. The Russians had collected one and a half million men for the campaign in the Carpathians and another army had assembled on the frontiers of Lithuania and Poland to avenge the defeat of Tannenberg. A new German southern army under Linsingen was sent through Hungary to stiffen the backs of the Austrians, while Hindenburg made his preparations in the north for repelling, or rather annihilating, his adversary. East Prussia was again to be the scene of an enveloping movement which, if carried out with lightning speed, would result in a second Cannæ. General Sievers was now in command of the army that was to invade Prussia. The German frontier districts had been occupied by Russian troops since the previous November, while a very small German covering force held the line of the Angerapp and the Masurian lakes.

It was now midwinter and everything was profoundly peaceful. The Germans could not move ; a sudden wave of cold had paralysed both friend and foe, and the roads were blocked with snowdrifts. The sentries stood out like so many blocks of ice and hardly ever fired on the rare occasions when they caught a glimpse of one another. Under cover of this inaction, however, Sievers had assembled his nine corps and was only waiting for the Grand Duke to give the order to attack, which could not be long

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delayed. It was impossible to move the masses of troops that were concentrated within a relatively small area except by deployment to the front. Troop-train after troop-train went rolling through East Prussia towards the frontier. If Hindenburg weakened his small army of occupation still further by sending reinforcements to the Carpathians, some funny things would happen on that front, so reasoned Sievers' Staff. They too would have their Hindenburg manœuvre.

But that was a winter's tale which was soon to have an end ! Suddenly German shells came whistling over the Johannisburg heath and columns were seen advancing through the snow-covered forest sides. Were the Germans mad ? What was their tiny defensive force trying to do ? The raid, however, was on too large a scale to be a local operation. One could never tell what these Prussians were up to. Surely Hindenburg himself couldn't be there ! According to the reports received by the Grand Duke it was a quite unimportant affair.

On the 8th of February, to the alarm and dismay of Sievers, Hindenburg's presence was confirmed beyond doubt. The latter had regrouped his forces and transferred his main strength northwards so secretly that not a single spy had succeeded in reporting his movements. The northern wing of the German army, which now extended as far as the Memel, was formed of the new 10th Army under Eichhorn ; while from the south Litzmann was advancing with furious speed and had already passed the Polish fortress of Ossoviecz.

The tough Siberian troops, who felt the cold as little as bears, put up a stout defence in the centre of the line near Lyck, but were compelled to yield to the pressure after several days of hard fighting and to fall back, leaving masses of frozen corpses behind them. Further north

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Sievers tried hard to hold his ground in the forest of Schorell, but Eichhorn's troops attacked him on both flanks, and he had to withdraw in haste, in order to make good his escape to Kovno, as the German troops had again crossed the frontier near Eydtkuhnien.

Meanwhile the envelopment of the Russian army had proceeded apace and the masses were retreating in inextricable confusion across the moors of Rominten towards the lower ground round Augustovo and Suvalki : Litzmann, moreover, had got ahead of them in the south and a thaw had set in : this time escape was impossible.

Again Hindenburg had reformed his centre and reinforced his wings in Cannæ fashion and again the manœuvre had succeeded, with more annihilating results, indeed, even than at Tannenberg. The congestion was so terrific that the enemy could not move. Silently and apathetically they allowed themselves to be led away, regiment after regiment. Unit after unit in endless succession emerged from the woods with uplifted hands until at last the total number of prisoners made amounted to 110,000.

Such was the winter battle of the Masurian lakes, another triumph due to Hindenburg's imperturbability and cool audacity. What the nation felt about the victory may be inferred from the following lines by Wilhelm von Scholz, which are based upon an ancient legend of East Prussia, but of which Hindenburg is made the hero.

“ When the shining plough once more cuts through the sod :  
And unearths weapons worn by the destroyer,  
And bones broken by the thresher,  
And the peasant surveys his find,  
He feels as if the sky were suddenly overcast,  
As if terrible clouds were gathering in the offing,  
Outlining the form of a mighty hero :  
And menacingly o'er the Prussian landscape  
Stands the mighty thresher, the spectre of Masuria.”

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The Grand Duke was furious and dismissed his generals right and left, shut himself up and vowed vengeance. Now or never he thought. This time he would invade Central Europe through the Carpathians and Hungary and crush it. He ordered his millions to advance upon the mountain front, whose glittering ice concealed its hidden terrors. It was one of those dances of death which were to be known later in the west as material battles, because of the material resources that were used and the opportunities afforded to Science to celebrate her murderous orgies. The Grand Duke was now seeking to accomplish the same object by means of the apparently inexhaustible human material at his disposal : he would sacrifice hecatombs greater than any which legend had as yet recorded.

The Russian divisions clambered up the northern slopes of the mountain passes to attack the Germans and Austrians, who awaited them under cover of the ice and rocks. As one division was wiped out the Grand Duke drove another to the assault. Over icy fields strewn with corpses they advanced, only to add to the piles of frozen corpses that blocked their way. For days and days the human surf rolled forward, unfurled, and was sucked back amid scenes of appalling horror. Although the Austrians gave way a little here and there, the Grand Duke was unable to break through.

With the advent of warmer weather in April the snow began to melt, and for weeks the streams of Galicia were tinged red with the blood that poured down from the most awe-inspiring mountain scenery that the human eye has ever gazed upon. Half a million human beings had been sacrificed by the Grand Duke ; the resources of Russia in human material were not yet exhausted, but the fighting efficiency of the soldiers thus led to the slaughter-house had been terribly impaired.

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Spring and Easter acted as an inspiration to fresh achievements. The optimistic and resourceful Hötzendorf kept on proposing a gigantic enveloping movement against the Russian armies. Hindenburg was to get round them in the north and he in the south. In the first place, however, the Austrians were not remarkably efficient soldiers ; in the second place the huge Russian fortresses in Poland could not be disregarded ; and last but by no means least the German Higher Command had not yet decided to make the east the main theatre of war.

Falkenhayn advocated a ' limited offensive.' East or west—that was the decisive question, the answer to which was to decide the fate of Germany. The one essential from Hindenburg's point of view was to arrive at a decision and stick to it. Falkenhayn's method did not seem to him to solve the problem. Hindenburg was anxious to consummate the defeat of Russia ; an attitude which constituted a striking departure from traditional military beliefs that were held in Germany. The prevalent opinion in the Empire was in favour of a decision in the west. Russia, it was alleged, was so weakened that she would soon agree to reasonable conditions. But was that so ? The Emperor and the politicians, too, quite expected Petrograd to propose terms of peace after a few more reverses. That, however, was impossible. The liquidation of an obviously disastrous war would now let loose a revolutionary movement of a very different kind from that which took place in 1905, and a revolution in Russia was the one thing of which our political aristocracy was chiefly apprehensive.

This is the point at which our war policy began to go astray in the east, and the first link in a long chain of subsequent errors.

Hindenburg had had the upper hand in all the fighting

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that had gone on between August and April, but apart from his two partial Cannæ, he had accomplished nothing extraordinary. He himself always adhered to the belief that his campaign in the late autumn would have ended in the annihilation of the Russian army if he had been given the effective means of doing so.

Would he be given them now? Falkenhayn still persisted in the old-seated belief that Russia could not be conquered. The last opportunity of effecting a radical change in the strategical situation in Europe was neglected in defiance of Hindenburg's advice and admonition.

The final say, as yet, was not with him, and he therefore confined himself to expressing his opinion 'freely and openly,' while quite agreeing that the decision 'obviously' could not rest with himself. Why did he not rely upon the enormous moral weight that attached to his advice in virtue of the confidence the nation reposed in him and over-trump his adversary? He could not have been dismissed, no one would have dared to offer such an insult to public opinion, fettered though it was at the time.

The problem east or west, which was the issue between Hindenburg and Falkenhayn, would undoubtedly have been solved in the former's favour had he chosen to insist. In that event Russia would have been knocked out in 1915, our best army in the west would not have been frittered away at Verdun in 1916 like the Russian army in the Carpathians, the way would have been paved for an economic union in the east, and an alliance would have been formed which would have obviated all danger to the Central Powers from Roumania and Italy.

Why, then, did he give way? Ludendorff had not then acquired the influence which one day was to overshadow for a time even that of Hindenburg; moreover, the younger general, even though he was loath to admit it, was always

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somewhat of a westerner at heart like Falkenhayn, and still unduly influenced by the western theory of Schlieffen and Moltke, although from the military point of view it was now only of historical interest. Schlieffen, moreover, had always been the great advocate of a victory "which would disperse the fog of war like magic and cleave with one blow the Gordian knot which had defied generation after generation, and which generation after generation had in vain endeavoured to undo."

Although the Marshal by reason of his training and acquirements was merely a soldier, though admittedly a first-rate one at that, nevertheless from the military point of view his was the sounder judgment of the two, thanks to an intuitive perception which was not the outcome of reasoning. Hindenburg, however, was incapable of pushing matters to extremes, he could not swim against the stream and acquiesced in what he believed to be inevitable, his *dæmon* obeyed a decree of fate over which he had no control ; maybe that he had learnt to obey too well ! Insubordination of any kind was repugnant to his mentality ; he was too static by disposition even to entertain the thought of disobedience.

Nevertheless, as the year 1915 advanced, the main interest of the campaign shifted to the eastern theatre of war, not from any action on our part, but owing to the inexorable force of circumstances. For the effect of Hindenburg's victories, as it turned out, was far more important than had been originally foreseen ; not that this was much consolation : for the great Russian Cannæ was, as it turned out, to prove impracticable.

At the end of April our troops began to move on the eastern front. From the tongue of land formed by the Memel one group of German armies invaded Lithuania and advanced through Schaulen to the naval base of Libau,

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while a corps of Prussian cavalry overran Courland up to the Gulf of Riga, and pushed forward its patrols to Mitau, the ducal capital. The liberation of the German inhabitants of the Baltic provinces from the Russian yoke had begun. Their hard-bitten brethren were received with a jubilation and friendliness that were inspired by feelings of racial kinship ; it seemed as if a new day had dawned upon Courland and would soon dawn upon Livonia as well.

It was in the south, however, where Mackensen was in command of an Austro-German army on the Dunajec that the main blow fell. His chief of the staff was Colonel von Seeckt, who was one day to become Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Republic. After a short preliminary bombardment of greater violence than had ever been witnessed in the east, the enemy's front was pierced between Tarnof and Gorlice : the Russians thereupon fell back, and the passes of the Carpathians were free once more.

The Grand Duke now attempted to try an outflanking manœuvre and to get round the enemy through the Bukovina, but was foiled by an audacious counter-manœuvre on the part of Linsingen, the commander of the southern German army, who attacked him and drove him across the Dniester. Lemberg was recaptured, and the Russians in southern Poland began to fall back. The army of the Tsar had lost half a million prisoners in eight weeks, and was severely, but as yet not mortally, wounded.

In consequence of the entry of Italy into the war on the side of the Allies, the Austrian main army had now to be transferred to the Isonzo, where it performed much more creditably than against the Russians. Its place was taken by German troops, who now held three-quarters of the line in the east. Falkenhayn, nevertheless, was not satisfied about the situation in that quarter, and still deprecated an 'unlimited' offensive.

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Hindenburg had been waiting all this time to take action on his own behalf. His intention was to launch an outflanking movement from Kovno in the north and Lemberg in the south. A great Council of War took place at the Palace at Posen on the 2nd of July at which Falkenhayn and the Emperor were present. The question to be decided was whether to attack the enemy's centre in Poland or to try to outflank him from Kovno. The Emperor and Falkenhayn were against an unlimited offensive: they considered it sufficient if the enemy's line were broken, Warsaw taken and the bulge formed by the front in Poland flattened out. Hindenburg gave way once more: after all, as he remarked consolingly, the point where the northern offensive began was more or less a 'matter of sentiment.'

General von Gallwitz hammered away at the Russian line on the Nareff. It was now to be seen whether the girdle of fortresses that had been built with the money of the French 'rentiers' could resist the pressure. The first attack was brought to a standstill; the Grand Duke had strengthened his flanks and Hindenburg was short of artillery. Owing, however, to Mackensen's advance from the south between the Bug and the Vistula upon Lublin, the Grand Duke was faced with the alternative of either weakening his centre in Poland or initiating some big movement of his own. But he was at the end of his tether, speaking from the point of view of an offensive, and he had wasted too many of his effectives in operations that were strategically sound, but which had failed owing to the inefficiency of so many of his generals.

Long before the ring of forts round Warsaw had fallen the Grand Duke had decided to retreat, and the steam-roller turned about, with disastrous effects for Poland and Russia. Fortress after fortress fell before the German artillery, including the huge arsenal and camp of Novo

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Georgievsk with a garrison a hundred thousand strong. It was an unpleasant reminder to the Grand Duke of the fate of Samsonoff and Sievers : was he himself to be the victim of another Cannæ ?

Warsaw fell without a struggle at the beginning of August, the three armed forts on the Nareff succumbed at last, and when Grodno surrendered early in September the whole Niemen front of which it was the corner-stone collapsed. In six weeks the Russian front on the Vistula had receded 150 miles.

The Grand Duke was not the man to retrieve the situation after such an appalling disaster. He was dismissed in disgrace by his Imperial nephew, who, amid the jeers of the Central Powers, now assumed the command in person. The Little Father, supremely incompetent as a commander though he was, kept two bloodhounds called Ivanoff and Brussiloff, who were to drive more than a million Russians to their death before Tsarism and Russia were overtaken by their bloody fate.

Hindenburg now resumed his huge enveloping movement. His idea was to feel his way forward in the north past Dvinaburg and in the south past the Volhynian triangle of fortresses, and see if he could not still effect another Cannæ on a big scale. This time Falkenhayn made no difficulties ; the German victories in the east had assumed such proportions that it was essential to exploit them operatively.

The march through the huge wastes of Poland absorbed huge effectives in the way of protection, administration and technical reconstruction. The unfortunate inhabitants, who had been deprived of any means of existence in consequence of the ravages committed by the Russians, had flocked into the areas outside the zones of operations. Order and decent conditions could only be restored if

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effective measures were taken to prevent the Russians again over-running the country. Falkenhayn accordingly gave the Marshal a free hand, but owing to Mackensen having been ordered in the meantime to advance upon Belgrade in order to clear the way to Turkey and Bulgaria, Hindenburg was considerably restricted as regards the number of troops at his disposal.

In the north the campaign proceeded at first according to Hindenburg's programme. Below invested Riga and attacked Dvinaburg. On the 18th of August the outlying fortifications of Kovno were captured, and the chief menace to Prussia was removed. Vilna was occupied a month later, and the Russians began seriously to think of defending Petrograd.

In the south, however, matters had not gone so well, and the advance had been brought to a standstill. It was the same old story : Hindenburg had attained his objective, but Hötzendorf had failed to do so. The latter had been anxious to assume the offensive against Italy as well, but unfortunately for his various plans they always miscarried. The Austrians had advanced in the extreme south up to the Sereth, but had been unable to make any impression upon the fortified triangle in Volhynia.

Ivanoff had no time to lose if he was to begin his counter-offensive. He had brought up labour battalions, dépôt troops and even camp followers into the firing line. The Austrians were falling back once more before the onslaught of his masses, and the Germans had to stem the tide. Ivanoff, nevertheless, managed to gain a victory in Volhynia, where some Austrian divisions surrendered, and though he failed to break through, the Austrians lost a lot of ground which Linsingen only recovered with great difficulty. The attempt to capture the Russian main army had failed.

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In spite of the acclamations with which Hindenburg's victories over the Russians were hailed in Germany, he felt that he had been cheated once more of his decisive battle. He had been given a free hand this time, and the encirclement had failed. What had been probable in May and still possible in July was impracticable in September. The gains on paper were enormous, but the Marshal felt that victories and the extent of territory occupied were of no importance in comparison with winning the war. "The people at home," he wrote, "attach too much importance to my liking to marking progress on the map, and think each time that we've brought it off. We've failed again to make a clean job of it,"—a complaint, prompted by his realisation of the inward significance of the situation, that was naturally only made to those whose discretion he could rely on.

The curtain rose upon the third year of the war. What would 1916 bring forth? If a decision were not obtained, Germany would be held fast, as the forces by which she was invested were continually increasing. The sortie eastwards to the plains where inexhaustible supplies of food lay ready to hand had failed, and the Russian front was still unbroken. Doubtless the Russians would never again overrun our territory, but beyond that our victories had been barren of result.

On the western front preparations were apparently being made on both sides for a tremendous struggle in which all the latest engines of destruction would be brought into play. Falkenhayn was much too cautious to attempt to break through. His idea was to wear out his adversaries before the huge masses of Franco-British troops that had been concentrated could deploy with dire consequences for ourselves.

The east therefore was denuded of troops and Hinden-

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burg directed not to undertake any big operations that year. And yet all the time he was in Kovno he had an uneasy feeling that, darling of the nation though he was, the work he was doing was not in keeping with the expectations the nation had formed of him. Another man would probably have rested on his laurels. Contemplative though he was by nature, he was too much of a soldier to be content with inactivity.

He had not much faith in Falkenhayn's plans in the west. If only they had given him fifty divisions then he could have dictated peace in Petrograd. It was common knowledge at his H.Q. that the Tsar would never dare to come to terms until his armies had finally collapsed; common knowledge, too, that he was the tool of the war party in Russia, which would be swept away were it to admit defeat and consequently was no longer fighting on behalf of Russia, but merely to retain its own political predominance and to avoid paying the penalty of its unscrupulous deeds.

The administration of a huge part of what had formerly been western Russia was now entrusted to Hindenburg, whose functions were practically those of a civilian representative of the Commander-in-Chief on the eastern front. It did not take him long to obtain a grasp of the situation in the east, such as no strategist or politician at home could possibly acquire. In every situation there are certain imponderable factors which can only be comprehended by the man on the spot. Hindenburg had not as yet acquired this sixth sense as regards the western front, and when the day came for him to command there, he had to adapt himself to methods which hitherto had been unrecognised in warfare.

In the spring of 1916 the armies of the Tsar began to move. Once more the Russians were to venture on a big

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offensive. Were these troops really the last survivors of the once unlimited reserves of the House of Romanoff ? Towards the middle of March a group of Russian armies rolled forward towards Vilna. The ground selected for attack was intersected in the centre by two frozen lakes that were covered deep in snow, and flanked on either side by frozen bogs. The Russian assaulting battalions were six times as strong as those which held the German lines. A thousand Russian guns had been ordered to fire not only on the Germans, but on their own attacking troops if the latter were unable or declined to advance.

How entirely the Tsar was in the hands of his butcher generals is proved by the following order which was signed in his name. "The reserves and the artillery," it ran, "will at once direct their fire upon those units which fail to advance in the presence of the enemy, or show signs of letting themselves be taken prisoners. Men only slightly wounded as well as those who mutilate themselves are to be compelled to return to the firing line. No soldier who is still capable of fighting is to be allowed to pass through the chain of sentries to the rear."

The operation must have failed in any case owing to the contrariness of the weather. A thaw had set in, which rendered the marshes impassable and converted the lakes into a mass of drifting ice. Nevertheless the Tsarist Commander-in-Chief, a savage with the German name of Ewert, ordered the Russian columns to advance to the attack. The sacrificial offerings were mowed down in heaps by the fire of the German defenders, till a quarter of a million men lay dead. Save for the murdered dead who lay in heaps upon the plains no change whatever had taken place on the front.

Nothing clearly was to be done with the Germans, and the only hope that still remained to Russia was to deal a

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last desperate blow at Austria. The blow fell with startling, terrific, and almost annihilating effect. The result was better than even Brussiloff had dared to expect. The Russians could hardly believe their eyes. The fourth Austrian army collapsed at the first assault. There was no fighting ; the Imperial and Royal regiments, which consisted mainly of Czechs and Slovaks, threw their arms away and surrendered by divisions. It was less a defeat than a betrayal.

Was it the beginning of the end of the composite monarchy ? Had the Habsburgs lost their hold on their subject nations ? Was the attraction of the Slav for his brethren to prove irresistible ? Nobody dared to tell the awful tidings to the unapproachable old monarch at Schönbrunn, the last example of a prehistoric age, whose unyielding dignity alone still prevented the dual monarchy from falling to pieces. As some odious Viennese joker had remarked years ago : " He's been dead a long time, but don't tell him so or else you'll frighten him." Fate was to deal gently with him. In a few months he was to close his heartless eyes without having lost his belief in the virtues of inertia or realising that his proud kingdom of shadows had dealt itself a wound which was to prove mortal.

The Russians had not only pushed back the defensive system built up by the Central Powers in 1915, they had pierced it. They had hardly reached once more the passes of the Carpathians before the Austrian army in the Bukovina began to run. Brussiloff made no attempt to outflank it gradually ; he felt sure he could destroy the Austro-Hungarian army of the east without a Cannæ.

His hesitations had given way to a feeling of over-confidence which would have been justified but for the Germans. Before long their spiked helmets were seen and the Russians stopped dead in their career of victory. Linsingen had

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hurried up to deliver a counterstroke and Brussiloff perforce had to be content with a partial success.

Another and last offensive further northwards against the German Landwehr had no luck. The German southern army too held its ground beyond Lemberg in spite of terrible pressure. By the beginning of July equilibrium had been restored, but the harm done was irreparable. The Russian war party had regained confidence, and Roumania was lurking on the Austrian flank awaiting the hour when she could spring and deal a death-blow to the tottering Empire.

If Hindenburg had been allowed to destroy the Russians two years previously, the prospects for Central Europe would have been very different. Now at last, owing to circumstances for which he was entirely responsible, Falkenhayn was right in regarding the east as a constant source of danger, which it was impossible and indeed inadvisable to control. The armies of the Habsburgs had almost disappeared from that front, but a thin line of German troops still remained which was still just able to hold the Russians in check.

If only Falkenhayn's calculations as regards the west had been accurate and he had been able to preserve his forces in that quarter intact for the final reckoning! But what had he achieved, and at what cost? The cornerstone, the citadel of the French line, was Verdun. It was a great natural fortress which the French had converted into an impregnable stronghold. The sinuous river valley and the successive ranges of heights were studded with armoured forts and linked up with connecting works. It was this position, by far the strongest of the whole French front, around which the Germans had been encamped in a huge semicircle for months and years, that Falkenhayn chose as his point of attack.

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Why did he select the one sector above all others which was least suitable for his purpose ? Surely he wanted to break through ? Certainly ; but he wanted also to disprove by sheer force of dialectics the old, old principle of warfare that the weakest point in the adversary's defence is the best point of attack.

Falkenhayn's idea was to grapple with France where she was strongest. If the blow went home, the French would be struck to the heart, and be unable either physically or morally to hold out to the end. The French army was to be singed and asphyxiated in the furnace of Verdun, for there if anywhere the French would have to defend every foot of the ground, every stick and stone, regardless of loss. There could be no question of their evacuating the position ; stand they would have to. Even the slightest retirement would be disastrous. So he would set up a huge suction pump and suck the foe's capacity of resistance from the wounds inflicted upon it. The strategists of the Higher Command were deeply impressed by the originality of the conception. How old-fashioned seemed the methods by which the generals were working in the east when compared with an idea of this kind ! Let us wait and see, they said, what Falkenhayn's physical venture, if it may be so termed, will bring forth.

Towards the end of February the German waves were launched to the attack of this network of fortresses on a narrow front only ten miles long. The drum-fire was so fierce that woods were blown sky-high and the reserves cut to pieces before they could reach the trenches. The troops had to advance across hollows and ravines, up hill and down dale, and progress was slow. Terrible was the hand-to-hand fighting as attack from below was met by counter-attack from above. The assailants gradually succeeded in making such progress that the French general

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in command of the sector seriously thought of evacuating the forts on the east bank of the Meuse. Joffre, however, the victor of the Marne, sent up Pétain who was considered to have the best nerves, and the struggle continued. Battalion after battalion on both sides was sent into the fight, only to be devoured and swallowed up by chaos. Upon a long ridge shrouded in the smoke of bursting heavies stood Douaumont, a hellish spitfire. That too the Germans captured, first the glacis and then the outworks.

The effectives on both sides had been reduced by fifty per cent. Every day that the assailants failed to progress increased the superiority of the defenders, for the new German intermediate positions could no longer be used as starting points for fresh attacks. The front of the German offensive had to be extended to double its original length ; unfortunately, however, our casualty lists and our expenditure of shells increased in the same proportion. The suction pump was doing its terrible work. A hundred thousand *poilus* were dead and a hundred thousand field-grey riflemen too. The pump was not only working on our behalf. Spring had come on and now it was June and still Falkenhayn would not give way. Ridges, woods, villages, pill-boxes were captured, lost, and recaptured once more. Verdun had become the ossuary of Europe. The French called it a 'mill,' the Germans a 'hell.'

Gradually the world became accustomed even to this interminable massacre. Now and then a communiqué reported "All quiet in the west." But sooner or later it would have to end. Children could not be born quickly enough to fill the maw of such a monster. The flower of our pre-war army lay dead before Verdun. Only untrained men, young or old, remained. The battle of the Marne and Verdun sealed the fate of our German hopes, and Falkenhayn had done no better than Moltke. While the

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former was still reeling under the shock of his frustrated plans and shattered armies the French began their offensive on the Somme. Thirty-seven divisions against eleven. For seven days and nights the artillery of the Entente, six times as numerous as our own, drummed on the German positions. Gas shells poisoned the ground. Bombing and fighting squadrons darkened the skies. The battle lasted for four and a half months, at the end of which time we had lost half a million fighting men. The French and English had lost even more, but what of that ! The suction pump was working against us. Falkenhayn, the calculator, had wasted his substance. The Austrians had collapsed in the east and Roumania had declared war. It was a case once more of Hindenburg to the rescue ! And the Kaiser sent for him.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE HINDENBURG AND LUDENDORFF CONDOMINIUM

IN the midst of mighty forests on the edge of the most valuable coalfields of Upper Silesia stood the princely residence of Pless, one of the seats of the great European nobles where feudal traditions were still maintained. His Serene Highness Hans Heinrich XV of Pless exceeded in wealth and importance many ruling sovereigns, and his pre-eminence among the international aristocracy was assured by the beauty, wit and liveliness of his wife Daisy, an Englishwoman of royal descent.

Princess Daisy, the confidante of the Emperor William and King Edward, and indeed of nearly every member of the Royal families of this monarchical continent, did not appreciate the atmosphere of the German Court which prevailed at Pless, and when the war began she regarded it as a personal injury to herself, and made no secret of her sympathies for her own country. This was quite sufficient reason for our super-patriots to suspect her, quite unjustifiably, of being a spy. She was watched and her movements were restricted ; at Pless she was regarded as a stranger, and her presence was only tolerated there occasionally, for in 1915 German G.H.Q. with the Emperor at its head had removed thither.

Austrian headquarters, under the Archduke Frederick, had settled down at Teschen, just across the frontier.

It was in the magnificent apartments of Pless, whose

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white façades, gilded halls and terraces seemed all too French, that the new International of the Central Powers lived and schemed. It was impossible either for soldiers or politicians to do their work properly or thoroughly amid such surroundings, for the ceremonious atmosphere of the old diplomacy clogged the work of the huge machine. It was the last occasion on which the courtly methods by which the fates of nations were decided were displayed in all their brilliant vanity.

As if the German courtiers were not bad enough, they were joined by the Austrian camarilla, a set of feudal intriguers who regarded war and politics as a drawing-room game. The ghosts of a dying Europe disguised as chamberlains, masters of the hounds, or grooms of the stole, flitted through the halls while an up-to-date general staff was endeavouring behind closed doors to calculate with mathematical accuracy the requirements of a mechanised army. The master of the house only wore his hussar uniform for appearance's sake ; to be a real soldier or do his job as a civilian was more than could be expected of him. Can we be surprised that the real leaders, above all a positive thinker like Falkenhayn, should have been more or less paralysed by their courtly surroundings ? And then those wearisome banquets, where pessimism was considered incompatible with good table manners, no matter how serious the situation.

By July of 1916 optimism, however, was played out. So gloomy was the situation on both fronts that even the atmosphere of Pless was affected by it. The Emperor, who at last took a more reasonable and serious view of the situation than his suite of courtiers, requested that Hindenburg should be sent for, in spite of the dislike previously evinced by his entourage for the latter's advice.

Hindenburg came, and with him at last an atmosphere

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of reality. A series of conferences with Falkenhayn took place, as the outcome of which the latter resigned. In the banqueting hall it was stated that everything had been splendidly arranged, but that Falkenhayn had 'a violent toothache.' It was typical of Pless! The toothache, however, got worse when Roumania declared war. Hindenburg and Ludendorff were again sent for, but Falkenhayn had resigned before they arrived. The latter had been improved by misfortune, and retired without the smallest resentment. Hindenburg succeeded him, and Ludendorff was appointed the chief assistant of the new Commander-in-Chief.

What action would the new leaders take? Such was the question on the lips of an expectant nation and even of their fortune-favoured foes, who regarded the new appointments with undisguised apprehension. What would their first step be?

There were signs of disintegration and trouble everywhere. Theirs was, indeed, a task which required super-human wisdom and energy. The enemy had secured the initiative everywhere. Hindenburg and his Ludendorff, who, thanks to his marvellous activities, was soon to rise superior to the subordinate position that had been formally assigned to him, started by making a thorough inventory of all the available resources which, owing to the force of circumstances and the lack of a sense of proportion, had been scattered about the various fronts.

The hierarchy for the issue of orders was simplified. In the west they decided to stand on the defensive and to have no more Verduns. Steps were taken to induce the Imperial Government to make better use of the available man-power at home. This was the beginning of the Hindenburg programme, which from the point of view of its political after-results was gradually to become a Luden-

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dorff programme, owing to the senseless and ineffective interference of the latter in politics.

First of all, immediate steps had to be taken to deal with the greatest military danger, namely the intervention of Roumania with a million fresh soldiers. What troops had we to oppose to them? The only way to collect a few divisions was to comb out the old fronts. The surviving remnants of the Austrian débâcle on the Russian front could not stop the Roumanian advance into Siebenbürgen. Hindenburg once more set to work to outflank his adversary, and Mackensen, with an army mainly composed of Bulgarians, advanced northwards across the Danube, captured the frontier fortresses and invaded old Roumania.

Falkenhayn, who now commanded on the new front, in the meantime had been assembling his small army in the neighbourhood of Karlsburg, not far off Hermannstadt, which was occupied by the enemy. It was a district which had been settled by Germans in the past, and Falkenhayn determined to apply the tactics of Tannenberg and the Masurian lakes. The Roumanian right wing, which was rather weak, was outflanked by an Alpine corps and the Roter-Turm pass captured.

As soon as the first outflanking movement had been carried out Falkenhayn attacked the centre. The battle front gradually revolved on its axis. True, the Austrians gave way, but in the meantime the first Roumanian army had been surrounded and destroyed. Falkenhayn then attacked the 2nd or, as it were, the Rennenkampf army of Roumania and drove it back beyond Kronstadt, while the third fell back beyond the Carpathians, where it rallied behind Brussiloff's Russians. Unfortunately, two new long fronts had been created on the edge of Siebenbürgen and the Dobrudja, an impossible state of things from the point

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of view of the Four Powers. Things were now quieter on the Somme and several divisions were brought up thence. Towards the middle of November Falkenhayn made a vigorous attack upon the positions in the mountains, broke through at each end and sent his cavalry ahead to intercept the fugitives. Northern Wallachia was set on fire by the foe, and the smoke of burning stacks, oil-tanks and bore-holes which marked the line of retreat of the beaten army, testified to the thoroughness with which the Roumanians were laying waste their country.

And now a concentric movement began upon Bucharest. Mackensen's cavalry had crossed the Danube by a pontoon bridge and nearly reached Bucharest, outside of which the decisive battle was to be fought. By this time, however, Falkenhayn had brought up his North Germans, and the Roumanian army and the capital were in his clutches. The defeated army withdrew, Bucharest was occupied, and a pursuit began which only ended at the Sereth, 125 miles away. The Roumanian army was practically dissolved, and the Russians had to take over the defence of the new front. This was the first occasion upon which the troops of all four Powers, Germans, Austrians, Turks and Bulgarians, had taken part in a common victory, and the impression made upon Europe by these feats of arms was correspondingly great.

Although the military situation as a whole had not improved from the point of view of Germany, the campaign had been another great triumph for the German defensive-offensive system. It was another triumph, too, for Hindenburg, who was now in command from the Suez Canal to Flanders and the Baltic. The old lansquenet saying, "If you want trouble, take on the Germans," seemed to be not altogether untrue.

Hindenburg had never seen the western front until

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the autumn of 1915, when he and Ludendorff paid a visit to this theatre of operations, where they both felt that the World War would be decided. The eastern solution was a thing of the past ; the Entente had accumulated such enormous reserves of men and material that a victorious peace was impossible unless some operation were devised by which their ramparts could be overthrown.

That, however, was impossible at present owing to the shortage of troops and material that had been caused by the misadventure of Verdun. Could the home front supply the men, turn shells day and night, and stand the pinch of hunger ? Hindenburg's object in visiting the west was to see, learn and consider what preparations would have to be made in view of the final struggle. He inspected the Somme, the scene of the first material battle. It was on the banks of this winding streamlet of Picardy that Germany two years later was to make her fatal blunder.

To a strategist like Hindenburg the use of mechanical appliances in warfare, as was predominantly the case in the west, was a crude and horrible device. The assailant, he said, under these circumstances merely applied 'ram tactics,' the leader was afforded no scope for his imagination, and generalship receded into the background. A revolution, however, had taken place in the aspect and appliances of warfare, and the ram was in the long run to prove stronger than heroism.

The Marshal, who henceforth was to be 'their' Hindenburg too, was received on the western front with the utmost respect, although he had nothing new to tell them. The German Crown Prince detailed a detachment of storm troops to act as his guard of honour, and he was invited to present the heirs to the thrones of Bavaria and Württemburg with their batons as Prussian field-marshals.

He himself, however, was feeling anything but happy,

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for he soon realised that his original instructions for the treatment of the running sore of Verdun had not gone far enough : he had, indeed, stopped the attacks, but the ground which had been purchased by the loss of so many divisions had not been evacuated ; to tell the truth it had been retained for reasons of prestige in order to conceal the extent of Falkenhayn's failure.

It was an omission that was soon to be severely paid for. At the end of October the French rushed the German line to the east of the Meuse, and Douaumont, that monument of our heroic dead, was abandoned. The only thing to be done for the present on the western front was to hold on, and above all to produce ammunition. Hindenburg, who was still unduly influenced by the conception of 'genuine' warfare he had acquired in the east, was apprehensive of the disastrous effect of a defensive campaign upon the moral of the troops. The mere defender, he said, was perpetually exposed to the depressing influence of the horrors of the battlefield, and could not regain his spirits unless he advanced.

The spring of 1917 was to show what could still be achieved by the defence, at any rate upon the western front. In the meantime an attempt was made by other means to tilt the scales in favour of Germany either by submarine warfare or peace overtures, two methods which ran counter to and foiled one another and affected each other in a thousand different ways, and finally not only proved mutually destructive, but ushered in a new act of the World War, the last act but one which culminated in the final struggle and defeat. G.H.Q. on the one hand and the politicians on the other were to be henceforth the two decisive factors of the German effort. What was the Marshal's attitude towards politics ? He considered himself 'unpolitical by nature.' He was quite open and

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honourable about it. "The idea," he tells us, "of taking part in politics ran counter to all my inclinations. It may be that my critical faculties as a politician were insufficiently developed or that my soldierly feelings were too strong for me. The latter is probably the reason of my aversion for anything that had to do with diplomacy. You may call it prejudice or lack of intelligence.... I felt that diplomacy was a profession for which we Germans were naturally unsuited."

This aversion for diplomacy was quite in keeping with the beliefs traditional to a Prussian general, and was all to our advantage so long as we possessed the stronger or stouter battalions, and on those occasions during the war when our allies and friendly neutrals tried to influence international politics to the advantage of Prussia and Germany. In this war, however, the Empire stood almost alone, and our very allies, by reason of the enmities they aroused, acted as a drag upon us. Hindenburg's confidence in the armies which he led is all to his credit, but his, and above all Ludendorff's, under-estimation of the importance of the political factor was a serious hindrance to the harmonious co-operation of those responsible for the conduct of the war and our diplomacy.

The two instruments were never used in conjunction. The military mind was bent on securing compensation for the national sacrifices and our victories by means of annexations and an increase in our material resources ; the civilians felt that the mere maintenance of our position, and peace by agreement even if it entailed loss of territory, offered more reliable guarantees for the future of the nation than an unfortunately very doubtful triumph on the main front. Chancellor Bethmann was no believer in a victorious peace and annexations, but he was afraid to say so at Pless, because the soldiers hated the parties of the

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Left who supported him whole-heartedly in this respect; perhaps his position would have been stronger if he had been supported by the families which had provided Prussia with successive generations of statesmen, and not by Ebert and Scheidemann. The former, however, adhered to Ludendorff not so much because they had any national or international end in view, but because they were afraid of the democratisation of the state. Their attitude was merely a cloak for their class interests, and dictated by selfish apprehensions of their loss of influence as an estate.

And so it was that the national policy was affected as it had never been before by party spirit, which is always to the fore when radical reforms are necessary, and whereas a mathematically-minded general staff officer like Ludendorff thoroughly entered into the spirit of this game of cat and mouse at home, a man of such honourable and straightforward simplicity as Hindenburg was necessarily repelled by the intrigues which he was dimly conscious were going on around him.

Could the men who only lived to best their opponents by means of the spoken word bring about an honourable peace? So little did he think so that he took care, even when expressing himself with all the emphasis that was expected of him on official occasions as to our prospects of victory, never to draw the usual Pan-German conclusions. He wanted to win the war indeed, but whether the victory was to be exploited in a national sense or not never troubled him for one instant, and when he said that we wanted Liège and a strip of Lorraine and probably the coast of Flanders, he was merely looking at the question from the point of view of lines of advance, fortress barriers and operations.

Ludendorff had realised long since that the magnates of

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the heavy industries expected to make a lot of money out of foreign raw material, and that the officers of the feudal and agrarian class were bent upon obtaining large tracts of cheap land for their sons and themselves in the east. He favoured their tendencies, because he had long been aware that the maxim 'one good turn deserves another' held good even among patriots, and that a reactionary warrior caste would be fed by the well-heated furnaces of industry and the lords of many acres the moment there were no more huge war loans to be subscribed for. Not only must we win the war, said Ludendorff to himself, of course we must do that ; we must also make sure that no one subsequently will dare to refuse us three army corps as the cowardly gang of bureaucrats and critics did in 1912. He was like some fanatical Jesuit, who, although devoid of any personal ambitions, sticks at nothing in order to realise the chimæras of his imagination.

Ludendorff only regarded the 'home front' as so much clay out of which he could fashion his idol. The men who couldn't be trained and the women who bore no recruits were useless from his point of view. As regards culture, of course, a few Christs per division would have to be kept to teach the men to die, and schools of course to prevent them behaving like damned fools at indoor lectures. But the world would not submit to absolutism of this kind any longer, and history has some meaning after all.

Hindenburg possessed a very good knowledge of average human nature, but was quite at sea when he came to deal with extremists, and especially with a man of Ludendorff's stamp, at a time when public opinion was favourable to the realisation of the latter's ideals. Ludendorff, whose militarism was his last and best card, was bound to fail ; for he was unable to take that comprehensive view of events which is only afforded to a genius like Bismarck or

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to Hindenburg under the republic, when his wisdom had been ripened by experience.

War is "the continuation of politics by other means": a doctrine laid down by Clausewitz which is to be found in every subaltern's text book. But what was our policy before the war? Merely one of Imperial braggadocio. The least that could be done under these circumstances was to assign the war a political object which was attainable by force of arms. Did that mean that no other law was to be of any account so long as the war lasted? It is a saying which was frequently on the lips of soldiers, but which has generally been misunderstood. If we had had an Emperor or Chancellor in 1916 who was capable of converting the generals from their stereotyped professional view that their only duty was to 'conquer or die,' and had decided to liquidate the war and thus avoid impending bankruptcy, we should have been defeated, indeed, but our casualties and our territorial and financial losses would have been halved and our moral would have been less affected. It is no disgrace for a nation to withdraw betimes from a hopeless contest, if it does so with the object of husbanding its resources in view of future reconstruction.

From the practical and psychological point of view, however, the adoption of a policy such as we have described was almost impossible. Neither the Emperor nor the Chancellor nor the Commander-in-Chief possessed sufficient stature, strength or breadth of mind to carry it out, and would probably one and all have collapsed under the shame of it. And even if they had done themselves such violence their sacrifice would probably have been in vain, for a more adventurous crew would have seized the reins and driven the chariot of war to destruction.

It is one of the many tragic ironies of German history that the propagandist campaign on behalf of our war

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objectives—which, by the way, had they been realised would have proved just as impracticable from the European point of view as those of Versailles—reached its climax in the summer of 1916, that is to say, at the very time when Germany for the first time was within measurable distance of disaster. But our political champions one and all believed that our victories of the previous year and the large slices of foreign territory held by us justified their demanding the surrender of our opponents at discretion. Anyone who dared to talk about the restoration of Belgium was shouted down as a traitor. The soldiers played with the idea of a ‘pledge,’ although it was none of their business, for the ways and means of peace was a matter entirely for politicians, and even Foch, the victor of the war, was never allowed to interfere in any way with the Government of France after the conclusion of the armistice.

In Germany, however, the politicians always consulted the Higher Command, even as regards diplomatic negotiations, and thus afforded Hindenburg an opportunity of manifesting his aversion for international disputations. Instead of sending them to the Chancellor he unfortunately referred them to the omniscient Ludendorff. Did not Bethmann enjoy the confidence of the generals? If not, it was their duty to procure his dismissal, if necessary by intriguing against him with the Emperor; for during this period of waning despotism he was the only legal authority who could dismiss the Government. Ludendorff was all for attacking the Chancellor in the rear. Hindenburg was unable to approve of this course. He felt it to be unfair: moreover, at heart he considered one politician just as bad as another. He was not so far out in this respect, for the whole of that generation of statesmen had been corrupted by the Emperor’s methods.

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Military science is a profession which need not necessarily degenerate, however evil the times, whereas politics are a game with a creative object which can only be played under favourable conditions. So great was the lack of political leaders that not even Ludendorff had a candidate ready. Permanent officials, indeed, who had been well trained in routine duties and nothing else, were available in abundance.

Hindenburg's name was misused in order to discredit Bethmann ; but instead of taking action himself, he merely shook his head and subsequently persuaded himself he had always been opposed to Bethmann : a misconception on his part which has been accepted as an historical truth, and has only been disproved by a most careful study of the original documents.

Hindenburg ought to have overthrown the Chancellor in 1916, when the situation was so serious that any action on his part would have been justified. For reasons which we need not go into, Bethmann was a tired-out man. The Higher Command had to choose between two political alternatives. Hindenburg evaded the issue, but he had no right as a soldier to do so. That was the mistake : either G.H.Q. should have given the Chancellor a free hand, or the generals should have entrusted the civil administration to someone whom they could have supported unconditionally, and who would have been invested by them with such dictatorial powers that all political life would have ceased and the war party alone have been responsible for what ultimately happened. There was no third course open to them.

But they adopted a third course, which was more dangerous than mere inaction. The Chancellor was to throw out peace feelers, first in one direction and then in another. But he was not to make any definite offer—God forbid !

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As soon as Bethmann handed round his notes to the Ministers of the neutral states, the world realised that Germany was merely proposing her own terms. G.H.Q. gave its consent to negotiations being opened, provided Germany retained possession of what she had gained by force of arms. Who was going to be taken in by nonsense of this kind ? Our adversaries, conscious of their superiority, answered triumphantly that the offer was not merely a proof of Germany's weakness, but also of her blindness. The Higher Command in its military pride had ruined Bethmann's conception, for the latter had really wanted to make a genuine offer and propose that the game should be drawn. Subsequently he denied having done so : but he knew very well why his first impulse had been to do so, and why he had afterwards changed his mind.

Hindenburg, contrary to his usual custom, got really angry when he perceived the effect of our unfortunate action. The Entente Powers declined one and all "to waste their time in considering proposals which were neither sincere nor seriously intended." Not sincere !—it was a reproach which hit Hindenburg very hard, and was all the more aggravating as he felt that there was a substratum of truth about it. Ludendorff regarded the matter with much more indifference. Well, then, they would have to fight to the bitter end, as he had always wanted. Hindenburg himself would gladly have got rid of the Chancellor at this juncture, but to everyone's surprise Bethmann suddenly declared himself willing to resort to the most extreme measures of defence, even if by so doing he were to break down the last but one of the bridges which connected us with foreign countries and consummate the rupture with America. It was reserved to his successor to break down the last of those bridges, the one which connected us with the Vatican.

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The year 1916, which had marked the turning-point in our journey towards our inescapable fate, had now drawn to a close. Thereafter, although no one as yet realised that at any moment we might stumble upon an abyss and we were still afforded occasional glimpses of open country, our road led downhill through the jungle until the time came when neither Ludendorff nor pacifist could help us.

Ludendorff and the admirals had resolved to prosecute submarine warfare in the most ruthless fashion. Neutrals who disregarded the submarine blockade were to be treated as foes. It was a decision which affected not only the small neutral seafaring nations but also and above all America. When Bethmann found that General Ludendorff had persuaded the Emperor to agree to these methods of warfare, he gave way and pretended to believe in them, although at heart he doubted their efficacy, and was allowed to stay on.

It was all very worrying and obscure from the point of view of Hindenburg, who realised instinctively the inadequacy of a system which failed completely to translate the national will into action.

The Admiralty Staff had acted very incautiously ; the statistics upon the strength of which the success of submarine warfare was anticipated turned out to be inaccurate, because they made no allowance for certain doubtful factors. Helfferich's economic calculations were not only academic but irrelevant. On the 9th of January, 1917, the official decision was made at Pless, and the campaign began. Bethmann deferred his resignation in order to prevent the belief getting abroad that he regarded the venture as hopeless from the outset. The Chancellor and the General avoided one another as far as possible. Whenever they shook hands Hindenburg shivered all over. Beth-

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mann seemed to him to be a grey ghost that portended disaster.

Three days after the commencement of intensified submarine warfare Wilson laid aside the mask of an honest intermediary and broke off relations with Germany. Two months later America declared war, an example which was followed shortly after by Brazil and China ; and with their accession to the ranks of our enemies the war acquired a world-wide character. The world's tonnage sank rapidly, and the food which Germany could not obtain rotted at the bottom of the sea. The Entente felt the shortage of food severely, and England and France had to be rationed. But Germany was starving, and hunger was an incentive to revolution. The 'turnip' winter was a terrible experience which was rendered even more intolerable, if possible, by the gluttony of the war profiteers. The war socialism which Ludendorff kept going mechanically by means of civilian 'field service regulations' and with a tremendous display of officialdom proved more anti-social in its effects than complete decontrol. Except from the point of view of the dishonest trader the socialisation of Germany was a failure.

Hindenburg knew nothing about all this. He was separated from the nation which adored him almost superstitiously by an army of officials. Ludendorff didn't bother his head about the misery of those who were writhing under the edicts and administrative decrees which deprived the weak of all that they possessed and favoured the profiteers. Discontent at home, our worst enemy, was artificially fostered by measures which, although they produced men and steel for the front, caused widespread demoralisation in the interior. How long would our material last and our human material be able and willing to go on ?

Ludendorff took care that Hindenburg only saw those

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who represented the 'will to victory,' a circumstance which was to prove disastrous as soon as our resources were exhausted. But no allowance was ever made for the time factor in the memoranda which gradually accumulated at G.H.Q. Hindenburg, the darling of the nation, can hardly be blamed for living and working far away from the people, for he could not disguise himself like the Caliph of Bagdad and visit the poorer quarters, and was compelled to rely upon his staff of advisers.

Other tasks, moreover, of a purely military character awaited him. The whole of the western front had to be recast in order to render it safer and more flexible from the defensive point of view. The two army leaders created a masterpiece. They had obtained by this time a complete knowledge of the external and internal structure of the western front down to its smallest component parts. The first thing was to shorten the front. In order to do so it was necessary to flatten out unnecessary bulges, convert the line of retreat into a desert, and finally secretly break off from the enemy to a new and deeply écheloned defensive position, where no one trench was of more importance than another. The front line itself was to become a strategical zone of operations on a small scale into which the adversaries could drive their ram, as it were, into a vacuum and then be broken up by a flank attack. The idea originated with Hindenburg ; the tactical development of the system was due to Ludendorff. A whole district began to pack up. Soldiers and inhabitants, war *matériel*, furniture, church bells and railway metals, were all removed ; not even a fruit tree or well was left to show where human beings had once dwelt. It was as if some vast physical convulsion had taken place, so completely had the whole area been changed into one huge no man's land.

The Germans christened their new stronghold the 'Sieg-

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fried' position. At any rate it was invulnerable for a year which was to seem an eternity. Of course when they wanted later on to take the offensive in order to win the war they had themselves to make their way across the devastated area. The evacuation was concluded on the 21st of March, and a year later to a day they had once more to break through this 'lunar landscape' on the Somme.

Before the Anglo-French spring offensive was launched upon our new western front unexpected events had happened in the east, where the first scene of the Russian revolution had begun and all was in confusion. Did it really come as a surprise? Its advent had been foretold by many who were well acquainted with Russian conditions and disbelieved in by others. In any case our military policy had never taken such an eventuality into account.

For a few days the world looked on in breathless excitement, wondering whether the peace party would come into power. Nothing of the sort occurred, however. The Tsarist régime with its Grand Ducal gamblers, its courtiers and drones had disappeared no doubt, but the liberal republic felt that it must show itself more bellicose than ever in order to strengthen its position.

Was Russia defeated or not? The time had come for her definitely to show her hand. If it were to endure, the new régime would either have to stick to the Entente or make peace at once. It staked its all quite justifiably on the Entente, and lost. It was a fatal mistake on the part of the new Government at this crisis in Russia's destiny.

The professors, manufacturers and lawyers, like so many others, were misled by their fear of German Imperialism. They believed they were fighting for their liberty and all the time were preparing the way for a régime of slavery

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which surpasses the worst system of self-emasculation that the world has ever seen. Once more the republican hordes were led to the sacrifice against the armies of Imperial Germany, a course which required less fortitude than to make peace. The courage which acquiesces in defeat is a far rarer quality than the courage of despair. If the nations of the world would only study history they would know that the only way to prevent a disastrous war degenerating into a catastrophe is to make peace before it is too late. Unfortunately belligerent nations, statesmen and generals never realise when fortune is within their reach. They hear her as she gallops by, but never stretch out their hand or go to meet her, and only dash after her in vain pursuit, when it is too late.

The first effect of the Russian revolution of February was to create a number of tiny, scarcely perceptible centres of disaffection in every country between the Neva and the Seine. They were caused by a bacillus which is known in military jargon as 'subversive tendencies produced by war-weariness.' As time went on the disease was called Bolshevism, after the Russian proletariat extremists who aimed at destroying the existing order of society in all the belligerent countries.

The movement at first appeared to be mainly directed against the officers. In Russia the lower orders including the soldiers, peasants and workmen, who had hitherto been held in subjection, formed 'Councils' which at once demanded the right to give orders.

The first country to be contaminated (and the fact is typical of the sporadic nature of the disease) was France, where a military crisis had occurred in the meantime, which for a brief period assumed very serious proportions indeed.

General Nivelle, a young and ambitious soldier, who had commanded the successful French counter-attack at

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Verdun, was now the rising hope of France. The reputation which Joffre had gained on the Marne had been lost on the Somme. Nivelle had always preached the virtues of *élan*, and thought he could win his laurels by assuming the offensive. Not for him the material battle, he would deal a 'staggering blow.' The authorities in Paris hesitated at first, but yielded in the end to his impetuosity. Nivelle accordingly prepared to fight three battles simultaneously and settle the whole business. Haig, the English field-marshall, was made to open the campaign at Arras, although he would have preferred to advance in Flanders, while Nivelle launched a double offensive on the Aisne and in Champagne. The new German system of elastic defence had not yet been perfected and failed against Haig's attack. Isolated parties fought independently among the shell craters, but failed to maintain connection with the rear. Companies, reserve detachments, and even counterstroke detachments were cut off and lost themselves in the maze of trenches.

The English found out, too late indeed to be of any advantage to them, that they had nearly broken through. The dangerous moment passed, however, without any change in the strategical position. Nivelle then started his bombardment. "Our hour has come," he told his troops. Guns of all calibres poured ten million shells on the foe. The advance began on the 16th of April, and two days later Nivelle knew that he was beaten. He had anticipated that the decisive battle would be fought on the first day, a sheer impossibility and a terrible mistake on the part of a general. He immediately reinforced the other two advancing armies with a third which was expected to reach Laon the same evening. His battering ram stuck fast on the Chemin des Dames, the ridge which has been the scene of so much European bloodshed. The reinforcements were assailed by waves of defensive fire on their flanks. The three

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armies were unable to deploy and, owing to Nivelle's obstinacy in refusing to retire, were cut down where they stood. Haig tried to relieve the pressure at Arras, but failed. Not once but several times did Nivelle mass his troops and try to bring off his *grand coup*. It was all in vain, and by May France had suffered the worst defeat in the World War. Nivelle, the *buveur de sang*, was dismissed in disgrace. His defeated divisions became infected with the bacillus from the east, whole corps broke out into mutiny and hoisted the red flag, while a revolt threatened to break out in the suburbs of Paris. The regiments formed soldiers' councils in Russian fashion, threw down their arms and refused to go into action. Was it the end of France ? The French Parliament took the reins into its hands and appointed Clemenceau to be the civilian Commander-in-Chief. The generals were made to obey the Tiger, who was to save his country. France in her dire distress had found a leader, whereas Germany had failed to do so. Hindenburg and Ludendorff had triumphed once more on the field of battle, but now they were to be faced with a world-wide concatenation of political disasters.

The German Reichstag was animated by a resolve that was diametrically opposed to that of the Palais Bourbon. The majority of the deputies were anxious to let it be known that they were in favour of peace without victory. The military situation at the moment was not so unfavourable as to require a demonstration of this kind, which after all was nothing less than a cry of distress. It was quite true that the submarine campaign had been a failure, but none of our fronts was in danger, and Germany could have stood on the defensive for some time longer.

Haig's offensive in Flanders put a fearful strain upon our German warriors. The fighting had begun on land, had thence been transferred to the air, and was now raging

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furiously in the depths of the earth. But the army and the homeland were too accustomed by this time to horrors to be impressed by them or by the graphic descriptions contained in the communiqués.

They hadn't got through : they shouldn't get through. It may be that the German defence was impenetrable. If the Germans had never taken the initiative and sought the decision which destroyed them, no real misadventure from the military point of view could ever have befallen them. The Central Powers unfortunately were compelled to stake everything, even at the risk of collapse, on the result of a successful campaign, for unless they succeeded in forcing an egress the greatest fortress that had ever been known, with its 120 millions of besieged inhabitants, was bound to die of asphyxiation.

Must a way be forced out, or could the politicians find the key which would open a door ? It was the same question that had been asked the previous year, only the need for an answer had become much more insistent. War and Policy had been suggested very timidly and doubtfully as the solution of the problem in 1916, but now Policy alone held the field. Why was this ? And who were the advocates of such a course, and what did Hindenburg want ? The Marshal by this time had become the great military expert on the western front, a very essential but not for the time being a very absorbing rôle.

Ludendorff and the parties of the Left in the Reichstag were the politicians, two powers which owing to the importance attached to doctrine in Germany as compared with personality, could neither comprehend nor supplement nor combine with one another. In France a journalist deputy like Clemenceau, Jacobin though he was to boot, could be entrusted with the guardianship of the national interests. Germany was divided up into two cliques,

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one of which was composed of generals, excellencies, millionaires and junkers, and the other of the leaders of the working classes, intellectuals, the lower middle class and democrats, and there was no contact whatever between them. The two political camps, in fact, spoke entirely different languages. Strangely enough the bourgeoisie in general hardly realised that a conflict was taking place, and therefore remained inarticulate throughout the crisis.

The very people who were cheering on Ludendorff were the ones who grumbled most about the wretched, hopeless, interminable war. Apart from their entire lack of political aptitude, training or practice, they were too irretrievably subservient at heart to take their own protests seriously. Otherwise they would have insisted upon the appointment of a popular leader, not necessarily of outstanding ability, to direct affairs at home, and told Ludendorff to confine himself to his own sphere of duties. The military dictator consequently obtained a free hand and, as the Emperor was too intimidated to interfere with him, at once secured the dismissal of Bethmann.

He began by appointing as his creature in the Wilhelmstrasse a man called Michaelis, one of the most inept of the whole gang of servile officials, whose absolute nullity was concealed beneath an outwardly energetic exterior. He had once made a warlike speech which had met with the approval of the soldiers, on the strength of which he was now selected as the Chancellor who was to steer the Empire through the crisis. During the next three months at Ludendorff's behest he underwent a series of political discomfitures, and rejected a not unpromising offer of mediation on the part of the Pope.

As the General could not be induced to agree to the surrender of Belgium in order to obtain peace, the conciliatory action on the part of the Reichstag, as might have

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been expected, proved entirely ineffective. The policy of compromise had proved a failure abroad ; it was now to be seen whether the problem of reform at home could be solved on similar lines.

The agent who was selected with this object in view was Count Hertling, an old man who was too worn-out by all he had been through to regard opposition to Ludendorff otherwise than as so much useless trouble.

His disdainful indifference and his entire submissiveness had a most reassuring effect in every quarter. The Reichstag came once more to heel, and Ludendorff—incredible though it may seem—at once proceeded to divide up the world so far as it was his to dispose of, and conquer what he had not already got. There were queer countries still going all over the globe. Germany wasted her men and her material in expeditions to far-distant lands. As for the cost, money had become so cheap that he could afford to ignore the financial aspect of the question.

Beyond another hard-fought action at Cambrai, in which 360 tanks and 1,000 English aeroplanes took part, nothing of importance had occurred on the western front. Haig had seen the uselessness of bombarding the marshes of Flanders, and had decided to resort to tank attacks, the latest form of cavalry charge. A hundred of these caterpillar-driven monsters lay shattered to pieces at the end of the battle, which concluded the campaign in the west so far as 1917 was concerned. Neither adversary had gained ground, but both had suffered severely, the enemy far more so than ourselves. Nothing more was to be heard of the west until the trumpet call of fate summoned the combatants to the lists for the last time.

Almost exactly a year before that November which will be remembered so long as German history endures, an event occurred in Russia which came as a surprise to no-

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body but the German authorities, who had only vaguely and doubtfully anticipated it. Officers, then as now, were unable to conceive a revolution otherwise than as 'Putsch.' And so it was that when the storm burst that had been gathering for a hundred years, it came far more as a surprise to the best-informed of our generals than to the humblest trade-union official.

The Bolshevik agitator Lenin had been locked up in a special train and conveyed by Ludendorff's orders from Switzerland to Russia, where it was hoped his influence would prove fatal to the war-party in the new democratic government. Ludendorff was too lacking in prescience to foresee that revolutionary pacifism was bound to be far more dangerous and disintegrating in its effect upon other countries than a weak liberal Government, however militant it might be. Hindenburg in the meantime had again and again opposed the idea of the Germans playing the part of an incendiary in the scheme of world revolution because he instinctively realised the danger of assisting the Reds to bring about a revolution, even if Russia alone were to be affected by it. Ludendorff, however, on the strength of the advice of his 'experts,' among whom, of course, his experienced and constitutionally-minded Marxist fellow-countrymen were not included, proved that Russia could never be defeated by powder and shot, but only by propaganda. It looked at first as if everything was going according to programme.

It was on the 6th of November that Lenin received control of Russia, and before even the official news had come through the wireless it was known that Russia was about to make peace. It was not a peace based upon an international contract, but a revolutionary peace; in other words, a continuation of the struggle by other means, in the reverse sense to that intended by Clausewitz. The

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Reds agreed to negotiation, and the plenipotentiaries met at Brest-Litovsk, then separated, and finally reassembled.

For nearly two months Germany took part in the sham deliberations, which from the very outset were remarkable for the entire lack of veracity and the histrionic attitude of both parties. Not for centuries had our military policy sunk so low. If our war diplomacy during those few weeks be reviewed in the light of subsequent knowledge, the attitude of the German leaders appears absolutely incomprehensible.

Brest-Litovsk, indeed, was the last chance afforded the military monarchy of Germany of taking a political initiative.

To add to our other misfortunes Hindenburg was very prejudiced at the time against solving our difficulties on democratic lines and allowing the people to have any say in our diplomatic policy. He, too, could only look upon eastern Europe as a pawn in the game, an attitude which he himself had persistently combated as inimical to our political interests when he commanded in the east.

The two generals were anxious to annex a belt of territory on the Polish frontier and convert it into a fortified area. Ludendorff especially wanted the belt to be made as wide as possible.

The Foreign Office, which was then presided over by the Secretary of State Kühmann, a man of great capacity but of no influence whatever, regarded this camouflaged attempt to annex non-German territory in the east as such a mad idea that he scarcely made any protest at the conclusion of negotiations. Kühmann considered it useless to try to minimise the mischief of a solution that was impossible in principle by trying to graft on to it territorial arrangements in east Europe which might otherwise have had some chance of enduring.

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Apart from Ludendorff, the whole of the Higher Command were distinctly uneasy about the violent methods by which this so-called peace had been brought about. Even Colonel Hoffmann, the delegate of General Headquarters, who since Tannenberg had gradually become the great authority on eastern affairs, did his best to moderate the extreme views of the Higher Command.

The Emperor, who was pulled in contrary directions by the advocates of the policy of force and the tribunes of the people, pursued a devious and by no means happy middle course. Ludendorff behaved outrageously, and threatened to resign if the severity of the terms were in any way modified. Why did he do so ? Of what use was all this foreign territory to us ?

So great was the confusion generated in his mind by the policy he was promoting that he entirely lost sight of his own military requirements, and was consequently compelled in the winter or the spring of 1918 to fight the decisive battle in the west. Why did he not wind up matters rapidly in the east and send all his troops to the west ; why did he not leave it to foreigners to clear up the chaos in their own country ? But no. He now declared war upon Bolshevism, which he had fostered for his own purposes, and ordered not only Landwehr but troops of the active army to advance upon Charkoff and Odessa. The Russians, of course, as everyone of any practical knowledge could have foretold, had not made peace, but merely started a campaign of propaganda upon an hitherto unexampled scale.

Hindenburg in the meantime had tried not once but many times to smooth down the differences between the Emperor and Ludendorff, the Foreign Office and Ludendorff, the political parties and the various civil authorities which were too convinced of their own merits not to seize

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the opportunity of playing a conspicuous part in contemporary history. He was so far successful that he prevented the violent clash of conflicting opinions, but was unable to insist authoritatively upon the acceptance of a reasonable compromise on account of his deep-rooted objection as a soldier to making concessions to politicians.

Germany had thrown away the chance given her by fate at Christmas, 1917. And now at the beginning of the last year of the war our soldiers were trying to effect by policy what Hindenburg would and could have done in 1915, namely, exploit Russia after her defeat for our own material and idealistic ends. Even by 1916 Hindenburg had realised that the moment for doing so had gone by. In 1918, when it was much too late, he allowed expeditions to be undertaken in the east without any definite objective being assigned to them. It was not his fault that the European machine was revolving automatically at such tremendous speed that he was unable to count the number of its revolutions. No living person could have done so.

The only course that remained open to the two army leaders was to seek success and victory, and with them the confirmation of their doctrines in that sphere in which they were supreme ; in war pure and simple. The alternative in the west had to be faced. Countless millions of human beings felt that 1918 would be the last year of the war, and end in triumph or disaster. The last hour of the world's passion had come.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE COLLAPSE

THROUGHOUT the cold and foggy nights of March Germany's last available reinforcements were marching up to that part of the western front whence Hindenburg was about to launch his main attacks against the fortified lines of the Entente. Every possible precaution had been taken to conceal their movements from the enemy. The Higher Command had removed from Kreuznach on the Rhine to the little watering place of Spa in Belgium, and the Operation Section had been sent forward to Avesnes in French territory. It was here that the Marshal and his assistants were to make their final technical arrangements before the army descended into the arena for the last time.

The colossal war experiences of the last three and a half years had been most carefully sifted by the best organising brains in our army. It may be that the plan was unduly theoretical and elaborate, and in spite of every precaution lacked perhaps inevitably the simplicity which is the hallmark of genius. Even the best work of the ablest men is bound to be ineffective if essentials are obscured by a mass of detail—when the wood cannot be seen for the trees.

The fate of the battle would depend upon the reserves. Ludendorff had given up any idea of forming a huge *armée de manœuvre* or *armée de poursuite* behind the front of attack. Was it that he had not enough divisions to do so ? At all events he had 193 divisions in the west, of which

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42 were new to this theatre of war. Owing to our unfortunate military policy, however, 38 divisions were detained in the east. General Headquarters tried very cunningly to get over the difficulty of reserves by adopting a huge system of camouflage, in order to prevent the enemy forming any idea of the strength of the German forces. The only result, however, of our attempt to tie down the hostile reserves by means of a series of simultaneous sham attacks was to confer upon them extreme mobility and enable them to intervene at those points, where their presence was least welcome to the Germans.

Hindenburg has explained his strategical objective in very clear and concise language. "Our object," he wrote, "was to deliver a telling and if possible unexpected stroke. If we failed at the first blow to beat down the resistance of the enemy, then the blow was to be followed up by further strokes that were to be delivered at other points along the enemy's defensive front until we had attained our objective. My ideal from the military point of view had naturally always been to make such a breach in the enemy's system of defences as would enable us to revert to open warfare."

There was therefore a great deal to be done before a commander could hope to achieve a Cannæ such as Hindenburg had accomplished in the east. Let us take the expression "a real breach." Under what conditions would such a breach be effected? No such case had ever occurred in the west, where every attempt to break through had ended in a more or less deep indentation of the hostile front. Hindenburg's offensive methods were subsequently made the object of very severe criticism on the part of French military writers. The French General Buat maintains, for instance, that the German generals could only have succeeded if they had adopted diametrically opposite methods. The mistake, he says, that was made by the German Higher

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Command, was to try to make a wide breach at the start, instead of holding down the reserves of the Entente by a number of partial attacks delivered either simultaneously or in succession, and then breaking through wherever the adversary's defence was weakest.

The problem has been carefully examined by military experts all over the world, but we are bound to say after a careful consideration of their criticisms that the German plan was right in principle, having regard to the limited extent of our military resources. From the point of view of the Entente Buat was undoubtedly right. The French and English, not to speak of the American divisions, were intervening in the fighting in ever-increasing numbers as the weeks went by, and were able to deal far less carefully with their reserves of men and material. Extreme economy was bound to be an essential feature of any German plan of operations.

It may be said that if the German G.H.Q. had shortened its front and even dislocated its whole line of defences prior to the first great offensive the armies which took part in the decisive battle would have been stronger. Hindenburg was asked more than once after the war why he had not introduced more strategical elasticity into the front by evacuating the old positions, and why the troops had not been withdrawn partially or even wholly from the quieter or less important sectors, until the great 'surprise battle' had been fought.

The answer is—and it is one that must naturally occur to anyone who takes the trouble to think—that it was impossible to run such a risk in view of the general situation. If the French and English armies had been overthrown at once, well and good, then the audacious genius who had taken such a risk would have earned imperishable renown in the annals of warfare. But if the offensive had failed,

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such a venture would have been a pure gamble. If the German armies held their old trenches the failure of the offensive would not necessarily involve us in disaster, and the attempt to break through could be renewed subsequently at other points of the front.

If the worst came to the worst the old front with its defensive system was still intact, and Germany, although she could never hope for a decisive victory, would still have been very far from defeat. Peace could not of course have been compelled by force of arms, but there would still have been a chance of bringing the war to an inconclusive end by means of negotiations. Such considerations were based of course upon a military fallacy which the German Higher Command had no means of avoiding.

It is one of the fundamental principles of war that an army never surrenders till it is forced to do so. To solve a crisis by means of a compromise is of the essence of politics, whereas national war once begun must be pursued to the bitter end.

It cannot be denied that Germany was not defeated in a political sense only. The proud saying : " We were undefeated in the field " is one which was invented as a consolation and for the moral edification of our brave ' field greys,' and they may be forgiven for believing it. As a matter of fact, however, all the efforts to conclude the war on honourable and tolerable terms were bound to fail owing to the steadily increasing weakness of Germany and her inability in the long run to withstand a world in arms against her. The military ideas of the Higher Command were intrinsically and inevitably unsound, because it failed to realise that during the last stage of the war failure to obtain success in the field was equivalent to defeat.

For in March 1918 Germany could not have won the war. Even had the final operations been even more fault-

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less and more grandiose in their design, she was too exhausted to do so.

In spite of her condition, for which the two army leaders were not responsible, the latter simply could not afford to forego the grand offensive, which was the final cause of the overthrow of the old Empire. Our leading public men and the public itself would naturally never have admitted their bankruptcy until they were faced with disaster.

On the 21st of March, three German armies under cover of a brilliantly-controlled rolling barrage were launched to the attack on a front forty-six miles in length. The right wing was to drive the English back towards the coast and the left to separate the French from the English. The right German wing, however, was very soon brought to a standstill, whereas the left wing advanced so rapidly that for one moment it seemed as if the front was about to be pierced. A great deal more ground had been gained than had been anticipated, a circumstance that was very prejudicial to the control of operations.

Great difficulties were experienced in bringing up reinforcements across the crater area of the Somme. General Foch was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Franco-British armies and at once set energetically to work to re-organise the defence by means of his reserves. In the meantime an attack upon Arras had failed owing to unfavourable weather, and the offensive against Amiens had come to a standstill.

The next German tidal wave unfurled upon the Flanders front. The English defences were broken at Armentières and the mighty bastion of Kemmel Hill fell into German hands. Nevertheless none of the German successes up to that point had been decisive.

At home undue importance was attached to our latest feats of arms and they were enthusiastically applauded.

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War patriotism once more rose rapidly to fever heat, and the nation for the last time was swept by a wave of optimism. The Emperor pinned on Hindenburg's breast the Iron Cross with golden points, an honour which had only been conferred upon Blücher after his victory at Waterloo. This highest of all his war decorations was the one most frequently worn by the Marshal after his retirement.

In spite of this well deserved recognition of his services, he was already filled with gloomy apprehensions. "What is the use of all these orders," he wrote to his wife about this time ; "a good and advantageous peace is what I should prefer. It is not my fault in any case if the contest ends unfavourably for us."

Unless the ground we had gained could be made to serve some new strategical purpose, its possession was a curse instead of a blessing. There was no object to be attained by merely hammering the enemy's lines. It was merely imitating the bad example they had set us for the past three years. In order to create a diversion Hindenburg attacked in the direction of Paris. The defences of the Chemin des Dames were carried, the Germans reached the Marne and beheld once more the river from which they had been compelled to retire in September 1914. Paris trembled and prepared once more for a siege. But Clemenceau roused their drooping spirits by declaring in the Chamber : "The Americans are coming and the Germans are exhausting their strength by their successive attacks. We must fight till the last hour, for that hour will be ours."

We had got half-way to Paris indeed, but the German offensive expired once more on the banks of the Marne. An outflanking movement to the north of Montdidier failed for lack of reserves. The configuration of the new front was in some respects a great tactical disadvantage

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to the Germans. It was now June, and yet no decisive action had been fought on the western front.

The last Austrian offensive against Venetia ended in June also, with a demoralising defeat for the Danubian monarchy. Every night the troops deserted to the Italians and the Entente, and their trenches were found empty in the morning. The German Austrians were the only troops who could still be induced to mount guard. Hötzendorf was made a scapegoat and dismissed.

By the beginning of July more than a million American troops had arrived in France. Hindenburg now contemplated another offensive in Flanders in view of the failure of the operations against Paris, which meant evacuating the bulge on the Marne, and sending every available man northwards. In that event, however, the French would have had a free hand, and it was agreed that an attempt should be made first of all to take Reims in order to improve our position. The attack was a failure. Our tactics were out of date, and no effective means had been discovered of dealing with the squadrons of tanks of our enemies. On the 18th of July Marshal Foch abandoned his defensive attitude and assumed the offensive.

The German western army was nearly worn out ; within a few weeks or, at the most, a few months it would be at the end of its tether.

At the end of July a complete revulsion of opinion took place in Germany. The failure of the offensive against Reims decided the fight for the national will against the army leaders. Up to the failure of the offensive against Reims the military had been able to maintain national determination at the sticking point ; they were no longer able to do so. The moral of the troops on the western front, too, began to deteriorate, and their fighting spirit to weaken rapidly under the pressure of Marshal Foch.

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Up to the end of July the English and the French had only gained local successes. Might not the fortune of war change once more? Previous experience in the west had shown that offensives on a large scale sooner or later invariably came to a standstill. After the 8th of August, however, the Higher Command was compelled to abandon even this hope. For the first time entire units proved unreliable and refused to obey orders to go into the firing-line. The reserves as they advanced were greeted by their worn-out comrades with cries of 'war prolongers' and 'blacklegs.' Such cases may have been the exception, but there was no question that demoralisation and disintegration had set in, and that it was very doubtful whether the army was capable of putting up a sufficiently stout resistance to enable it to be withdrawn. Foch, indeed, had as yet been unable to take full advantage of his surprise attack to the east of Amiens, and Hindenburg did his utmost to exhaust his adversary by a series of partial rearguard actions. The troops were engaged with the greatest caution and on sound tactical lines, for the object of the fighting was to enable us to maintain a shorter front. A new defensive system was being constructed in the meantime between Antwerp and the Meuse.

The German generals have been the object of much criticism subsequently on the part of strategical experts for not withdrawing betimes to deeply écheloned defensive positions, where they could have re-formed their troops at their leisure. Unfortunately, nobody until quite lately had thought of anything but an advance, and no preparations had been made for a retreat. The evacuation of the huge stocks of warlike stores in the zone of operations and the line of communications area could not have been effected without an enormous loss of *matériel*.

During the last four years a system of warfare had

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gradually been evolved upon the western front which was entirely lacking in flexibility, and therefore seriously impeded that liberty of manœuvre to which we had been accustomed in previous wars; and the collapse of the entire machinery of organisation, the greatest that the world had ever seen, would in itself have paralysed our capacity of resistance.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff were no longer fighting for victory ; they were not even attempting to stand on the defensive, but merely trying to postpone a catastrophe until the politicians had arranged the preliminaries of peace. The Imperial Government and the Higher Command, it should be said, had agreed that no official peace overtures were to be made until conditions at the front had been stabilised.

This decision had been reached as the result of a conference at Spa in the middle of August, at which the principal military leaders were present. No events took place at first at the front of sufficient importance to affect their views, and six weeks were allowed to elapse before any political action was taken. The Higher Command had persistently held out hopes of a change in the situation : it cannot therefore divest itself of its responsibility in this respect. Its vague prophecies had no justification in fact : by the end of September, indeed, it had become obvious that even a prolonged resistance on our part was out of the question.

It was on the 28th of September that Ludendorff walked down the broad staircase of the Hotel Britannique on his way to the Marshal's office. His shaking limbs betrayed his nervous tension, his face was tragic, and he seemed to be walking as in a dream. As he entered the two men exchanged a look more pregnant and eloquent than any that had previously passed between them. Ludendorff

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submitted what Hindenburg already knew to be inevitable, namely that the speedy conclusion of an armistice was the only possible means of avoiding disaster. The General was less able to retain his self-control than his old chief, and suddenly urged, with all the vehemence with which he had hitherto advocated resistance to the last, the acceptance of the gloomy alternative. The armistice was inevitable—it must be concluded at once, he said—at once. Hindenburg could hardly utter a word, he merely gripped the other's hand. The two men believed they understood one another, but they were really only at one as to the seriousness of the situation.

Next morning the permanent secretary of the Foreign Office turned up. Ludendorff's urgent demand for peace at any price was a staggering blow for poor Herr von Hintze. Why should our diplomacy have been expected to act with lightning rapidity? It had never hitherto been allowed to have a will of its own, and in view of the hopelessness of any action on its part had naturally not formulated a programme. What about Wilson? Wilson had led the chorus of democratic pacifists, but would he be in favour of peace by agreement? It was only a straw, but Hindenburg snatched at it. For just a fortnight he actually believed in democracy, and persuaded himself against his better judgment that we should be spared the necessity of immediately submitting to our enemies if we professed ourselves converted to a belief in popular institutions.

He therefore demanded an audience with the Emperor, who, on this occasion at least, was told some of the truth and gulped down his liberal medicine. William II, who as usual took an exaggerated view of anything that was novel or exciting, at once decreed, at Ludendorff's suggestion, 'revolution by command.' Democracy was sent for—a fatal mistake, the effect of which was to last for ten

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years. Hindenburg's attitude with regard to his Imperial Master's sudden renunciation of all that he had hitherto believed in was one of critical but anxious reserve. He felt that the situation was hopeless, and had no belief in the value of the expedient that had been adopted. He therefore held his peace, and left it to others to pursue the hybrid policy of war and peace.

Chancellor Hertling resigned, and within twenty-four hours his very existence was forgotten. Everything now was upside down, and a week elapsed before another chancellor was appointed. Prince Max, the heir to the throne of Baden, was a Prussian general and a friend of the Emperor, who, like his namesake, Maximilian of Austria, the last of the Knights, lived in a world of his own imagination on the borderland between the past and the future, and could sympathise with the point of view both of the pacifists and of the diehards.

During the whole of that sultry October the Chancellor alternated between a policy of warlike cunning and a childish belief in humanity. The first appeal to Wilson was couched in fairly self-respecting language. The reply, however, showed how very much the idea of international fraternisation was at a discount in America. As our language became more humble the conditions of our adversaries increased in stringency. Wilson's intention apparently was to compel the Emperor to abdicate, and then introduce democratic government into Germany. "The destruction of every arbitrary power." What did he mean?

Ludendorff perceived that the Entente was bent on the subjugation of Germany, and that the latter's request to be allowed to form part of a world democracy was not to be productive of any military results. He at once abandoned the rôle of a democrat and peacemaker, and reverted

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to his original diehard opinions in their most exaggerated form. He was summoned to Berlin, where he merely made confusion more confounded by his braggadocio and the contradictory nature of the advice he gave the Cabinet. The Chancellor ceased to believe in Ludendorff's good faith, and at once set about to procure his supersession.

Stormy debates took place in the Reichstag, the only effect of which was to prove to the outside world how rapidly the country was becoming demoralised under the stress of defeat. Wilson's third note put an end to whatever illusions still remained. Hindenburg was anxious to do his duty even by this Government, which as a soldier and at heart he could not but repudiate, when suddenly Ludendorff committed a very serious breach of discipline. He issued an army order, without informing Hindenburg as to its exact tenor, in which he declared that Wilson's note was unacceptable to the army, and thereby raised the issue as to the supremacy of the military or the political authorities in its acutest form.

The two most prominent members of the Higher Command were summoned once more to Berlin. The two warrior heroes had a last joint-interview with the Emperor, and besought him to continue resistance till we had been honourably vanquished. William II, who had selected the Palace of Bellevue as the *mise en scène* of this historical discussion, referred them to the Chancellor, who was ill in bed. After a heated scene between Vice-Chancellor von Payer and Ludendorff, Hindenburg proposed that the decision should be left to his Emperor and King. William II had not as yet recanted his newly-acquired belief in democratic institutions. He dimly felt that the new authorities might be able to protect him if the enemy were to demand his abdication.

Erzberger, the peace strategist, had just started a new

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campaign of monarchical propaganda ; the Emperor therefore felt no difficulty about dropping Ludendorff. What did Hindenburg feel about it ? Commonsense and comradeship struggled within him for the mastery. Early on the 26th of October Ludendorff, full of anger with the 'cowardly Government,' proceeded to the Palace of Bellevue. The audience was a brief one. The Emperor was anything but gracious, and dismissed the General from the Service without promoting him or conferring upon him any of the usual marks of gratitude. Ludendorff went away without a word, but the shabby treatment to which he was subjected as the reward of his violent championship of the old régime gave him such a shock that his mind, as it turned out subsequently, was permanently affected by it.

The news was brought to the ministers as they were gathered round Prince Max's bed. The Chancellor wanted to get up, but his colleagues refused to let him do so. "What about Hindenburg ?" he asked. "He is staying on," came the brief reply. "Thank God !" the Chancellor murmured with a sigh of content as he sank down into the pillows. It was quite true. Hindenburg was going to stay on. The increasing seriousness of the situation at the front compelled him to return at once to Spa. The Germans were retiring step by step. They would have had to retire much more smartly if Foch had attacked them seriously, but there was no longer any need for him to do so.

Ever since the end of October, in spite of the vicissitudes of the political crisis, the question of the Emperor's abdication had been the one absorbing topic of conversation in the capital. The papers were already discussing the matter without any attempt at concealment, and the leading statesmen and politicians when driven into a corner could no longer parry the questions, admonitions

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and warnings addressed to them by merely turning the conversation. It seemed to be universally admitted that the Entente would decline to concede an armistice to the 'War Emperor.'

William II, although he did not realise that his throne was in any immediate danger, felt the atmosphere of Berlin to be distinctly chilly and oppressive after Ludendorff's dismissal. He did what he had always done in times of crisis, when the strain was too much for his nerves, and went away. He never guessed that he was leaving Potsdam and the palace of his forefathers for the last time. His thoughts, by way of distraction, reverted to the army. He would return in three days, he would only make a short "journey to the front" and go and "express his thanks" at Spa ; he was bound, as he said theatrically, to go in person and "thank the troops on behalf of the Fatherland for their superhuman exertions."

The Emperor and his courtiers had tried to keep their sudden departure a secret from the Chancellor. At the last moment, however, Prince Max quite by chance got wind of it and implored the Emperor by telephone to give up the idea. During the next two fateful weeks the telephone was to play an extremely important political part, that is to say, so far as the old chiefs and the men who were effecting the transition from the old to the new order were concerned.

No sooner had William II returned to G.H.Q. at Spa than he felt himself master once more ; for there every one of the officers from the Marshal down to the most junior subaltern knew what was due to the Monarch.

The Emperor had forsaken his people in spite of all Max of Baden's efforts to prevent him, and the Chancellor was left alone to face the approaching political catastrophe. Scheidemann, the socialist Secretary of State, wrote to

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Prince Max and told him that the Emperor must be asked to abdicate voluntarily. The Prince, although he himself was almost convinced of the necessity of this step, hesitated to take a decision which was particularly painful for one who was not only heir to a throne himself, but a cousin of His Imperial Majesty. The next thing was to find someone who was sufficiently courageous and intimate enough with the Emperor to be able to act the part of an intermediary. Unfortunately none of the personal friends of the Emperor possessed that kind of courage which is so much rarer than personal loyalty. The Prussian Minister of the Interior, a genuine liberal, Drews by name, undertook the task, but merely got a snub at Spa for his pains.

Hindenburg's moral authority at G.H.Q. was still intact. The Marshal had had no occasion to reject the demands for abdication, for nobody who wore uniform had as yet dared to approach him with such an undisciplined suggestion. Ludendorff's successor, General Groener, had just arrived at Spa from Kieff, after a journey across the whole of German Europe. He was a Würtemberger whose judgment, unlike that of his predecessor, was never affected by the extent of his responsibilities. Groener had never felt it to be part of his duty to profess extremist views and had always wisely endeavoured to conciliate the needs of the army with the exigencies of the home front. He was a strong-minded and scientific soldier, famed for his organising ability, whose knowledge of human nature and of the mentality of the working man in peace and war was only equalled by his familiarity with the technical aspect of warfare.

Before, however, the new Deputy-Chief of the Staff had had a chance of realising the serious nature of the situation at the front he was summoned once more to Berlin, where Germany was lying sick unto death. He was well aware that

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he was to be made to administer the drastic remedy and compel the Emperor to abdicate. He had long been convinced that William II would be unable to retain his throne in peace-time, but as matters then stood he felt that the Emperor's abdication would merely be the signal for anarchy. He had suggested to the Emperor's principal aide-de-camp that His Majesty should put himself at the head of a body of troops and ride to his death. Hindenburg, however, was informed of this suggestion, and although he appreciated the nobly pathetic spirit by which the proposal was inspired he was unwilling that a single soldier should sacrifice his life for sentimental reasons, unless the military situation required it.

The Marshal as before considered the question solely from the military and not from the political point of view, and he was well advised to stick to soldiering pure and simple, for it was to this determination to confine himself strictly to his professional duties that he owed that reputation for imperturbability, which gave him such a strong position when the political storms broke out which were then impending. The problem of the Emperor did not bother him, fate would decide it: as for him he would stick to his duty.

Groener and Prince Max discussed the situation in the garden of the Chancellor's palace. The General told him the plain truth. If the armistice were delayed, we should have to hoist the white flag. He couldn't even allow them a week. Saturday would have to be 'the last day,' and next Saturday was the 9th of November. Groener had an interview with Ebert and the other socialist leaders. They mutually respected each other, but the General could promise nothing. The tribune was broken-hearted. "Events will have to take their course," were his last words as he left the room.

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In the meantime news had come from Washington that Marshal Foch, the Commander-in-Chief, had been authorised to receive "duly accredited representatives of the German Government and acquaint them with the conditions of the armistice." So terms were to be dictated and there were to be no negotiations. The German delegation went off to receive in writing the conditions accorded to a beaten foe, conditions which were to be far more terrible than anyone as yet suspected.

In Berlin events had not yet assumed a revolutionary aspect. Some days previously, however, the High Sea Fleet had hoisted the red flag. The Supreme Naval Council at Spa had decided to risk all in a battle with England. The squadrons were to make a last heroic effort ; if luck held, they would relieve the west front and if not they must perish honourably. The sailors, who had long been in a latent state of revolt, declined to take part in the adventure. They saw no use in it and, moreover, they mistrusted their officers, whom they suspected of trying to prevent the conclusion of peace. When the fleet assembled in the Schilling roads some of the crews refused to obey orders and raked out the fires, and the squadrons were compelled to return to port. Shortly afterwards the men mutinied openly at Kiel and took command, and this was the signal for a general upheaval.

It was some time before the authorities at Spa could fully realise the meaning of this staggering blow. Admiral Scheer wanted to send a naval Ludendorff to Kiel to restore order. But it was too late. Thanks to Noske, the socialists had already consolidated their position on the coastline and the rebellious sailors were marching into the interior, spreading the revolution wherever they went. When would the wave of fury reach Berlin and what would Spa do ? The problem of the Emperor was lost sight of

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amid the dangers that threatened from this new and much more dangerous anarchy.

The Bolsheviks now prepared to make an end of the feeble forces that still upheld law and order. In Berlin the conspiracy of the 'Spartacus Alliance,' a secret society composed of German adherents of Lenin, began secretly to furbish up the weapons with which they had been supplied by Russia. They were supported by the left-wing socialists. The border-line between a proletarian democracy and the dictatorship of the proletariat had become very indistinct.

The majority socialists, who were led by Ebert and Scheidemann, alone attempted to maintain the framework of society. They were still represented in the Government, and far from abolishing the monarchy would have been quite contented with the abdication of William II. But the existing uncertainty, they contended, could not continue. They could still control the main body of the working classes, but would be unable to do so for more than another forty-eight hours unless Spa gave some sign. The naval mutineers were ejecting the old authorities as they advanced through Germany, and the counter-measures taken by the military authorities at home had proved quite ineffective. In Hamburg, Hanover and Brunswick the Red Soldiers' Councils had assumed the reins of government. Even the bridge over the Rhine at Cologne, the main connecting link between the army in the field and the homeland, was in the hands of the insurgents. Eisner had compelled the King to fly from Munich. And it was Friday the 8th of November! If the Emperor did not agree to abdicate that evening, Ebert's masses would have to be mobilised next day in order to prevent the Bolshevik organisation from getting the start of them.

The Chancellor had implored the Emperor by telephone to renounce the throne in order to save the dynasty. The

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only answer he got was couched in strictly official language : " His Majesty absolutely declines to discuss your Royal Highness's proposals as to the succession and still considers it his duty to remain at his post."

What had been going on at Spa during the day which preceded the general collapse of Germany ? Several generals at G.H.Q. had encouraged William II in his intention to march back the troops to Germany and conquer the criminals at home. Hindenburg did not associate himself with these advisers, but on the other hand, he did not oppose them. He intended first of all to find out by means of careful inquiries whether the army in the field would lend itself to a civil war.

The moment had now come for Hindenburg to decide between his duty as a field marshal towards his sovereign and his duty as a citizen to his country. It was a terrible conflict and it tore his kindly German heart in twain. He passed a sleepless night, an unusual experience for him. The light in his room that night, it was noticed, was turned on and put out again and again.

The Emperor on the other hand spent his last night as a sovereign in complete serenity. He was quite confident of being able to start next day and suppress the insurrection in Germany.

Meanwhile General Groener had finally satisfied himself, both on personal and general grounds, that the Emperor must be undeceived at the earliest possible moment, and at dawn he informed the Field Marshal of his decision to do so. He intended, he said, to take advantage of the conference that was to be held that morning at the Emperor's villa to explain the hopelessness of the situation and tell the Emperor that his reign was over. Hindenburg tried to reply, but was unable to utter a word. He turned very pale and clutched his writing-table with trembling hands.

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They then crossed over to the palace, where they found the Court generals still advocating armed repression of the rebellion. "May God preserve your Majesty from shedding blood in civil strife," Hindenburg interjected in a low voice that betokened deep emotion. William II broke off and suggested another alternative; very well then, he said, he would return home peaceably at the head of his army. It was at this point that Groener, broad shouldered and erect, came forward amid a general silence, and looking the Emperor in the face, pronounced the fateful verdict. "The army," he said, "will march back home as an orderly and disciplined body under its leaders and generals, but not under the command of your Majesty, for it no longer supports your Majesty."

The Emperor shuddered, bit his bloodless lips, and walked up and down once or twice without saying a word. The sitting was suspended and everyone went outside. In the meantime the Court officials had rushed to the receiver to find out what was going on at Berlin. The Government was impotent, they were told, and the streets were in the hands of a rebellious mob. The garrison troops had refused to shoot, and even where firing had been tried it had done no good. When the Emperor heard it, he said he would abdicate as Emperor but not as King of Prussia, and Prince Max was thereupon informed that William II had already agreed in principle to abdicate, and that only formalities still remained to be settled.

The Chancellor immediately announced the abdication of the Emperor in Berlin, and in order to avoid an interregnum appointed Ebert chancellor. It was admittedly an arbitrary action on his part, but the emergency was too serious to allow of his standing on ceremony. Early in the afternoon the generals assembled at the Field Marshal's house. Hindenburg with his strict sense of legality was

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horrified to think that the Chancellor should have de-throned the Emperor on his own initiative, and proposed that the generals should protest in writing. His one anxiety now that he was unable to save his War Lord was to prevent the latter being exposed to any personal danger. The Dutch frontier beckoned thirty-seven miles away ; once there and the Emperor would be safe.

It was a dispirited company that assembled in the Emperor's drawing-room, and stood shivering round the fire-place. Hindenburg made his report in short jerky sentences. "I cannot take the responsibility of allowing your Majesty to run the risk of being dragged to Berlin by the mutineers and handed over as a prisoner to the revolutionary government. Would to God it were not so !" Then the Emperor let loose the flood-gates of his Imperial wrath. "To think that I should have been treated thus by my last Chancellor !" he cried. It was the Nemesis of history. How had he treated his first Chancellor ?

In the royal train meanwhile preparations were being made for the departure to the frontier. William of Hohenzollern, however, had not yet made up his mind. He ordered arms and ammunition to be brought into his villa, and still said that he and his friends would defend themselves to the last. But it was only a last typical Wilhelminian gesture. He then withdrew for a short time to his private apartments while his generals stood by sick with horror, hoping he would come out alive, but fearing every moment to hear the fatal report. He returned, bade them a brief farewell, entered the car which was to take him to the station, and assured the aide-de-camp, who was sitting beside him as he drove off, that he would summon troops and fight to the last, even if it meant the end of all of them. He then sat down to dinner in the dining-car of the imperial train. Between midnight and dawn

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the train moved off under military protection towards Holland.

That evening Hindenburg retired early to rest. Unless he had a good sound sleep he would collapse next day, when he was most needed. It was his duty to control his mental and physical emotions by sheer force of will. Next day he would be the War Lord and in supreme command. He could not allow the army to wake up next day and find itself leaderless. After that, however, he would have to go, for how could he exercise the command on behalf of those whom he believed to be the enemies of the Empire?

General Groener sat up alone most of the night, a prey to terrible emotions. In front of him lay the appalling conditions of surrender of the Entente. Disaster in front of him, perhaps behind him, perhaps in the capital. Could he as an officer and a gentleman negotiate with the insurgents in Berlin? Suddenly he had an inspiration. He seized the receiver, called up the Imperial Chancellery at Berlin, and asked to speak to Ebert.

"Are you willing, Herr Ebert," he asked, "to protect Germany against anarchy and to re-establish law and order provisionally?" Ebert agreed to do so. Then, replied Groener, he and the Field Marshal would maintain discipline in the army and bring it peacefully home. Ebert offered all the guarantees he could, and the pact was concluded. "And the Field Marshal, you say, will retain the Command?" Ebert asked once more for his own self-satisfaction. Groener assured him that that was the case.

Early on the 10th of November the Deputy-Chief of the Staff made his report to Hindenburg. One last conscientious struggle and the agony was overpast. "I will stay on," he said. "I won't desert my people in their extremity."

The Executive Committee of the Reds was introduced

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immediately upon its arrival at G.H.Q. The chairman of the Soldiers' Council demanded a share in the executive authority, and the control of the troops. The General Staff officers replied that it had been settled with the new Government that there was to be no red soldiers' councils, but that each unit could elect its own spokesman. Hindenburg issued an order to this effect to the army in the field. The subalterns at the front refused to believe that their Hindenburg had thrown in his lot with the traitors. Events had happened at such breakneck speed that they had utterly lost their bearings. They had heard rumours of civil war and of the brutal severity of the enemies' conditions. Were they living in the same world as yesterday, when a war was going on which they had inevitably come to regard as eternal ? To think that the firing should have ceased, that the men should be climbing out of the trenches, that the French blue-clad sentries yonder should not be ducking or firing at them : was it an armistice or was it peace ?

And then the retreat began—very quietly—in column of route. The majority of the battalions had chosen their officers and N.C.O.s as their spokesmen. None of the divisions which had been in immediate contact with the enemy could understand at first the meaning of the revolution.

G.H.Q. removed on the 15th of November to Wilhelmshöhe, where Napoleon III had spent his captivity when France was defeated in 1870.

Upon his arrival at Cassel Hindenburg was received with every confidence by the revolutionary leaders. The People's Commissars had given orders that he and his Staff were to be allowed to carry arms. Grzesinski, the chairman of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Council at Cassel, who was subsequently to be Prussian Minister of the

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Interior, published a proclamation to greet Hindenburg. "Hindenburg," he wrote, "is fulfilling his duty to-day in a manner which endears him to us as never before. Hindenburg belongs to the German nation." It was the first time that a social democrat had paid homage to a Prussian general.

Very soon, however, trouble arose between the Supreme Command and the revolutionary leaders. On the morrow of Hindenburg's arrival at Cassel the General Staff issued orders forbidding any units of the field army to carry the red flag. Many commanding officers at once made this order a pretext for removing the hated red flag from public buildings. The popular government at Berlin at once protested. Even the Soldiers' Council at G.H.Q. showed signs of insubordination, and demanded that the troops should have the right to elect or depose their officers. An agreement was reached in the end, but confidence between the officers and the rank and file was never restored. At the beginning of December a congress of soldiers who had served at the front was held at Ems. The resolutions adopted were disastrous from the point of view of both Ebert and Hindenburg. The powers of the Soldiers' Councils were to be extended. The Higher Command held out against this decision more or less successfully, but as a matter of fact many units on their return from the front disbanded themselves when they reached their garrisons. The army in the field was no longer capable of restoring orderly conditions in those districts where the turmoil was worst, as responsible soldiers had fondly hoped.

The personal prestige of Ebert and Hindenburg was our last remaining hope. One of the Berlin newspapers published amongst its news the following unimportant item, which seemed to foreshadow the course of events. "The majority of the red cockades which are on sale in

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the streets are portraits of Hindenburg. Hindenburg's face has been painted over red, but the paint comes off very easily, and Hindenburg's face appears once more."

In the middle of December two divisions of the Guards under General von Lequis were sent to Berlin, to ensure the execution of the measures taken by Ebert for the preservation of order by disarming the inhabitants and the Red November Guards. The Government of the People's Commissars was divided against itself ; it had no means of enforcing order, and was liable at any moment to be upset by a gang of street roughs. Grotesque political incidents and comic arrests were of everyday occurrence. Unless a disciplined force was soon available the moderate Government of Ebert and Scheidemann was bound to fall. This had become so obvious that even the leaders of the majority socialists were no longer under any illusion on the subject.

Lequis' various attempts, however, to save them by his soldiers were one and all unsuccessful.

When the first regiment of the Guard entered Potsdam, on its return from the front, the men gave a good thrashing to every member of the Soldiers' Council of the reserve battalion and to everyone who wore a red armlet. But only a few days later they compelled their commanding officer to resign. The few companies which marched into the danger-zone in Berlin prepared for action, generally fraternised with the revolutionary bands after exchanging a few shots. The men in the Wilhelmstrasse were completely isolated. Their proud red army had disappeared. Should they assemble such troops as were still reliable and withdraw to Potsdam ? Should they make a last attempt under Hindenburg's leadership to re-establish law and order by force of arms ? The suggestion was duly considered and rejected. Hindenburg was not going to take any risks. Were this last desperate enterprise to fail, it

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would mean not only the final end of the army, but the victory of Liebknecht and Bolshevism over Ebert.

Suddenly a fresh military crisis broke out in Germany, which really seemed to portend the end of the army. The revolutionary parliament of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils had been sitting in Berlin since the 16th of December. It was a curious mixture of parliamentary decencies and gutter manners, and a scene of perpetual confusion. At last the most reasonable party gained the upper hand, and decided to convene a National Assembly immediately.

At this point, unfortunately, the Congress adopted a grossly offensive attitude with regard to military questions. "As a symbol," it declared, "of the destruction of militarism and the abolition of blind obedience all badges of rank are to be removed and no arms carried by soldiers off duty.... The rank and file are to elect their own leaders. ... Speedy measures are to be taken for the abolition of the standing army and the constitution of a National Guard."

Ebert was anxious to treat these seven Hamburg points merely as rules laid down for his guidance, but he was not allowed to do so. He was connected by a private wire with General Groener's office at Wilhelmshöhe. None of his extremist colleagues were aware of the existence of this wire, nor of the fact that he made use of it every evening after his rush of work was over, and while they kept a careful watch upon his every action they none of them had any idea that he was talking to Groener every night. Ebert now informed Groener of the unfortunate decision of the Congress.

This time Groener was unable to help him; he could see no way out of the difficulty; it was too much of a good thing, and Hindenburg would never stand it. The Marshal,

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as he expected, was very firm. "Tell Herr Ebert," he replied to Groener, "that I decline to recognise the decision of the Congress with regard to the executive authority of our officers; that I shall oppose it by every means in my power, and that I will not allow my epaulettes or my sword to be taken from me."

The officers were all of the same opinion. As Groener wrote to Ebert: "It is not we, Herr Ebert, who began the quarrel, and it is therefore not our business to put an end to it." The decision of the Higher Command was final. Hindenburg telegraphed to the generals in command that he did not recognise the decisions of the revolutionary parliament and that nothing in the Army was to be changed.

It was not the final breach, but it would have been had not other coming events thrown their shadows before. The second phase of the revolution, namely the fight between Bolshevism and republican democracy, was about to begin. Civil war, which had only been averted at the last moment by some happy chance, was impending. While Groener was deliberately procrastinating at Berlin with regard to the question of executive authority the insurgent chiefs were massing their troops for the final proletarian assault.

Just about the same time, that is to say between Christmas and the New Year, Hindenburg and Groener were able to announce that in their opinion the withdrawal of our western army had been completed.

Unfortunately, another cause of anxiety had arisen in the east where for weeks past bands of volunteers had been helping the remnants of our old forces to keep back the Poles and parties of Soviet marauders. The province of Posen had already been lost by an untimely display of pacifism, and the Bolsheviks were advancing upon East

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Prussia, while bands of German volunteers were waging a guerilla warfare on various small fronts in the Baltic provinces.

At the beginning of February the Higher Command removed to Kolberg in the north-east of Germany, the scene of Gneisenau's rise to fame. The arrival of Hindenburg revived the waning national enthusiasm of the eastern provinces, which fully expected him to save them once more.

" You volunteers and young comrades," he announced in his proclamation to the troops, " who are determined to risk your lives in the defence of the Ostmark, remember the brave fellows of 1914. And you, my old comrades who fought with me at Tannenberg and the Masurian Lakes, come quickly and help me. Do not let my appeal to the sons of Germany fall upon deaf ears."

But alas ! only three days later Marshal Foch, who was engaged at Treves in negotiating a prolongation of the armistice, sharply summoned his great German adversary to halt. All offensive movements, he said, were to be stopped, and the Germans were not to advance beyond a certain specified line.

Hindenburg begged the Government of the Reich to reject these demands ; the latter after a great deal of hesitation felt that the risk was too great, and even Hindenburg did not dare to advocate the resumption of hostilities in the west.

General von der Goltz continued to carry on the fighting independently in Courland, with the help of the local German Landwehr, while the Higher Command at Kolberg confined itself to reorganising the defence in the eastern provinces of the Reich.

In the meantime a new volunteer force, under the command of Generals von Lüttwitz and Maercker, who had

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assumed the command of the volunteer force which had been raised by Noske, the recently appointed Minister of Defence, had drastically suppressed the Bolshevik insurrection in Berlin and central Germany where the National Assembly was sitting at Weimar.

All this time the heads of the delegations of the victorious states had been quarrelling about the terms which were to be imposed upon the vanquished. If Clemenceau had had his way probably Germany would have been dealt with as Prussia was by Napoleon, and have ceased to exist as an independent state. The idea of French supremacy on the Continent, however, was more than Lloyd George could entertain : as for the supremely incompetent Mr. Wilson, he allowed his plans for an international democracy to be snuffed out without even lifting a finger to save them.

Nevertheless when all was said and done the conditions of peace were more terrible than even the most pessimistically-minded German had dared to anticipate. The whole country raised its voice in furious protest. On the 12th of May Scheidemann characterised the terms as intolerable and impracticable. The German counter proposals received short shrift at Versailles, only a few concessions being obtained and they of very inconsiderable importance. The paramount question of acceptance or rejection was passionately debated between Kolberg and Weimar. Patriotism and wisdom struggled for the mastery. Generals, ministers and popular leaders took counsel together as to where their duty lay. Even were they to hold out in the east and defeat the Poles, as they obviously could, nothing could save the west from the armies of Foch.

The mental conflict which Hindenburg and Groener now had to face was far more tragical than that by which they had been confronted on the 9th and 10th of November. Hindenburg summed up his feelings in the matter as follows:

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"Our decision as to the possibility of further resistance must depend upon the fighting spirit of the nation, and whether the latter really prefers to accept a humiliating peace, rather than face the alternative of making a last desperate stand involving in all probability its final overthrow." He got no answer to his question. But the Cabinet were awaiting his opinion and he could not evade the issue. After a whole night of mental agony his commonsense gained the mastery and he sat down and penned the following report :

"G.H.Q. 17th January 1919.

"In the event of a resumption of hostilities we can reconquer the province of Posen in the east and defend our frontiers. In the west, however, we can scarcely count upon being able to withstand a serious offensive on the part of our adversaries in view of the numerical superiority of the Entente and their ability to outflank us on both wings.

The success of the operation as a whole is therefore very doubtful, but as a soldier I cannot help feeling that it were better to perish honourably than accept a disgraceful peace.

VON HINDENBURG."

Armed with this document Groener proceeded to Weimar where he found the ministers in a state of irresolution and despair. Groener was compelled to warn his officers not to regard matters exclusively from a military point of view.

The civilians and the soldiers both agreed after a series of conferences that there was very little chance of a national uprising in the event of our rejecting the terms that were to be imposed upon us. For days the decision trembled in the balance. One government was defeated, and was succeeded by another which was willing to sign all but the disgraceful paragraphs which related to the war guilt and the surrender of the 'war criminals.'

At the eleventh hour Ebert called up Groener once more to get the last and final word of the Higher Command.

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During the first part of Groener's conversation with Weimar his old commander stood silently erect beside him. During the conversation and while Groener was giving Ebert his final views from the military point of view, the Marshal suddenly left the room. He could not stand by and listen while Groener summed up his views as follows : "The resumption of hostilities in spite of some temporary successes in the east, is bound in the long run to be hopeless. Peace therefore must be signed on the terms laid down by our enemies."

Presently the Marshal came back and laid his hand on Groener's shoulder. "The burden," he said, "that you have undertaken is a terrible one."

The National Assembly submitted to the victors. They could not even procure the omission of the insulting paragraphs. On the 28th of June two German ministers signed the treaty at Versailles in the same Galerie des Glaces, where the one-time Second-Lieutenant von Hindenburg had stood arrayed in the full-dress uniform of victory. That same day the Marshal retired from the army. His proclamation of farewell was couched in simple but noble language :

" Soldiers," it read, " upon my retirement my thoughts revert in the first place, with deep emotion, to the long years during which I was permitted to serve three Royal and Imperial Masters . . . and at the same time with feelings of deep sorrow to those sad days when our Fatherland collapsed. The self-devotion and loyalty with which officers, non-commissioned officers and men have stood by me have been a great consolation to me in these unspeakably difficult times. For this I would ask you all, and especially the volunteer corps who have so manfully mounted guard on the eastern front, to accept my lasting thanks. I have, however, to make a request as well as to express my thanks.

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Whatever you may think as individuals about recent events is entirely your affair ; but as regards your actions I would beg each one of you to be guided solely by the interests of his country. Personal views must be subordinated to the general welfare—however difficult this may seem. It is only by the united efforts of all of us that we can hope with God's help to raise our unhappy German Fatherland from its present depths of degradation and restore its former prosperity. Farewell. I shall never forget you ! ”

## CHAPTER IX

### INTERMEZZO

“ HE must live here.”

It was a wish prompted by a mixture of curiosity and self-complacency that had been frequently expressed by the citizens of Hanover when the news came of the great battle in East Prussia. They looked him up in the directory but in vain. So it was only a rumour. No, it was quite correct, but his name was to be found under ‘B’ and not under ‘H.’ Of course ! His name was von Beneckendorff und von Hindenburg, and he lived in a first-floor flat in the Holzgraben.

Hanover had been the first town to confer upon him its freedom, an example that was soon followed by a hundred others. Each time a new deed of prowess on the part of Hindenburg was announced in the official communiqué an enthusiastic crowd would gather outside his house, although of course, they knew he was far away. His wife, however, acknowledged the demonstrations on his behalf and occasionally would make short amusing speeches in reply, for she was an apt and ready speaker. Moreover, despite her grey hairs she was still young at heart, and full of merry quips and jokes—the very antithesis of a haughty matron. Whenever she got a letter from her husband in the field she would ring up her friends and read it out to them.

Her friend, Countess Crayenberg, lived close by and her mansion had become a rallying-point for all sorts and con-

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ditions of men—wounded officers under treatment; the Countess's favourite niece, who was subsequently to become the Marshal's daughter-in-law; a Saxon Prince and his wife; the 'King' of Hanover, its far-famed Lord Mayor Tramm; and many of the leading lights of the artistic and learned professions, one and all rallied round this sensible and cheery woman whose husband was so dear to the hearts of his countrymen. They had nicknamed themselves the 'Acting H.Q.'

To them she would tell the anxieties and hopes of her husband, whose letters arrived almost every day, and a multitude of exciting bits of gossip. The other day he had visited the Empress at the Schloss Bellevue. The windows were open and the room was very draughty, so the Empress hurriedly rose and shut the windows as she thought he had got a cold. I expect a certain amount of sentimental exaggeration was indulged in by 'Headquarters' when we hear of the guests shedding tears of emotion at the evening receptions. If he had been there we can be sure he would have told them to drop that nonsense.

In the meantime the Town Council had acquired Hugo Vogel's now famous picture entitled 'Hindenburg and Ludendorff at work,' which illustrates very clearly the distinctive characteristics of the two leaders. The town also presented its honorary burgess with the lease of a villa to ensure his being befittingly housed to the end of his days.

On the 8th of November 1918, alas! the red flag was flying on the Town Hall. Frau von Hindenburg called upon the new socialist Mayor, Leinert, who subsequently was to preside over the Prussian Diet, and told him that her husband would give up the house he had been presented with immediately if the new revolutionary leaders objected to the original gift. Leinert, the new dignitary, however,

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was not at all averse from playing the unfamiliar part of an august patron : he begged her not to think of it. The republicans, he said, quite realised what was right and fitting. His wife thereupon set about making Hindenburg's home inhabitable ; but the honorary burgess was still on active service, and who could tell what might yet befall him ?

The Low German country of Hanover from the sea to the mountains was rocked by revolutionary convulsions. In the adjoining state of Brunswick, and at Bremen close by, the Bolsheviks had set up a Soviet régime, and all was strife and confusion.

Would he return ? There were rumours of attempts by the extremists on his life ; it was even whispered in tones of awestruck horror that the Entente would not make peace until he had been surrendered to them and vengeance wreaked upon him. Frau von Hindenburg bravely stood by her motto, ' Nevertheless,' which in her old-fashioned way she had had carved in huge ornamental letters on a panel which hung on the wall of her room.

She betook herself for comfort to the well-thumbed New Testament and Psalms which had accompanied her father throughout the campaign of 1870-71, and read her favourite 23rd Psalm, which tells of the shepherding care of the Almighty even in the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

At last the second Versailles, and with it the bitterness of death, was past. The contrast between the Versailles of his youth and the national disaster was a terrible shock to his feelings, but the deed was done and nothing that he could do for the present would alter it. He would arrive on the 4th of July it was said. His aides-de-camp and a staff escort awaited him on the platform, and the citizens of the town of Hindenburg lined the streets from the station to his villa in the Seelhorststrasse.

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As he left the train a mighty cheer went up from the throats of his soldiers. The City Fathers in their shining tall hats found some difficulty in making their way through the ranks of field-greys, who had not been detailed as a guard of honour, but had come of their old accord to welcome their old chief.

The Marshal was wearing for the last time the field-service cover over his tall helmet of an Officer of the Guard. In future his Prussian uniform would only be worn in memory of the past.

His one wish now was to withdraw into private life and to live as an old man whose working days were past. It was for the younger generation, in whose hands the shaping of the future lay, to undertake the work of reconstruction so far as the available material permitted, or to construct afresh in the light of more recent experience. And if they really found it so difficult to agree as to what was best for the Reich and to interpret the wishes of the nation, he was not going to be dragged into their quarrels.

It was all very well for him to say so, but they would not let him alone: the nation looked to him more and more for patriotic encouragement—a request with which he found it very difficult to comply in view of the terrible spread of demoralisation that the restoration of law and order had proved quite unavailing to check. His appeals for co-operation, sensible though they were, were out of place at that moment. He himself, indeed, with his old-fashioned opinions, belonged to a party which with very few exceptions was doing its best to exacerbate political differences in Germany. What goal could he assign to the black, white and red parties, alliances and military associations who were so actively championing the cause of nationalism?

May the old German spirit of patriotism—may—may

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... He meant it just as honestly as he had always done, and yet it was merely a pious wish which could effect nothing, and those who extracted such useless exhortations from him would have been better advised had they refrained from doing so, for the hour for him to intervene in the affairs of state had not yet come.

His celebrity was more of a burden than a pleasure to him, and instead of giving him satisfaction it merely emboldened the importunate to make demands upon him. Do what he would, they would not respect his privacy. As he remarked one day with a humorous sigh to one of his acquaintances : " My wife has gone into the town to do some shopping. I used to like doing it myself, but I've had to give it up. If I were to cross the Georgstrasse, I should be followed by such a crowd that the traffic would be blocked."

Lieutenant-Colonel von Kügelgen, a grandson of 'old' Kügelgen, had offered to serve him as his aide-de-camp. Captain von Hindenburg, who was serving in the Reichswehr, was also transferred to Hanover, and he and Kügelgen formed the personal staff of the old Marshal whenever the latter was compelled to don his full uniform and decorations and attend some ceremonial function.

What did his house look like inside ? It must have been a regular museum. Those who were lucky enough to be invited there, or had an honest pretext for calling, never stopped telling of the wonders of this temple of fame. It was, however, something more than a museum which merely contained a collection of interesting antiquities, for the centre of interest was the owner of the house himself, who was very much alive and closely connected with every object within it.

It was a real pleasure to him to play the part of the simple custodian and show his visitors round, provided the

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latter kept their admiration within bounds and did not interrupt him. If they kept quiet and paid attention, he would swing his heavy body on to a chair like some young athlete, and extract the portfolios from the press which contained the documentary evidence of his labours during the war. On one occasion he was discussing the campaign in Poland in 1915. " You can see," he said, " we should have done it then by a big flank attack, only that . . ." and then he paused, " well, let's leave it at that," he continued. He was thinking of Falkenhayn.

The gifts presented to him upon various occasions were shown in the hall and the staircase. The first thing to attract the visitor's attention was a Turkish carpet into which the women of Anatolia had worked Hindenburg's picture and the map of the eastern theatre of war—the gift of Enver Pasha. There too on a lofty pediment stood a bronze group of elks, the gift of East Prussia to its rescuer. A huge antique German chest contained the honorary diplomas, degrees and patents of citizenship. The capital of Pomerania, which he had made his last headquarters, presented him on his departure with a tablet, upon which were inscribed the following words :

" He led an army of millions into the field and gained  
victories for Germany against a world in arms.  
And tho' he could not avert our fate  
He remained in victory and defeat the hero of his  
people.  
A giant in confidence and faith."

As will be readily understood, he was far more touched by this sacramental gift than by the many bombastic addresses which had hailed him somewhat prematurely as victor while the war was still in progress.

The colours of the cruiser *Hindenburg*, which was sunk

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by her crew at Scapa Flow in order to avoid the humiliation of surrender, adorned one corner of a room. One of the ship's lieutenants had rolled it round his body as he sprang into the water under fire, and brought it back to the man after whom the floating fortress had been christened.

From the gallery there stared down the head of a huge bison which the Marshal had killed in the primeval forest of Bialowics. "When the beast," he explained, "came face to face with me, I wondered for an instant which of us was going to get the worst of it, he or I." The silver axe of his Hungarian regiment was a reminder of the days when machine guns and trench mortars were undreamt of.

On the other hand, the swords of honour which stood in holders, like the umbrellas and the sticks of plainer folk, have continued to form part of an officer's equipment up to the present day.

As a rule his visitors, upon finding themselves face to face with the Marshal in his grey suit of working clothes upon the threshold of his study, generally tried to get off the solemn speech they had committed to memory. The Marshal, however, was invariably too quick for them. In his old-fashioned way he always began by asking them where they came from. If their visit had an official object, he would at once insist upon proceeding to the writing table and dealing with it; then only would he allow them to chat with him. Nothing would annoy him more, when anyone came to see him on business, than an attempt on the part of his visitors to examine or bring the conversation back to the many museum pieces around them.

Once when somebody, who had come to enlist his interest in an appeal, suddenly remarked that the picture of Moltke over the sofa must be by Lenbach, he answered angrily: "Yes, it is, but you didn't come here to talk about Moltke."

On the other hand, as soon as the business had been

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transacted, he was only too glad to exhibit his treasures for inspection. Most of those who have been privileged to see it have felt a historical thrill at the sight of the shattered helmet of Königgrätz. The spikes of the colours of the days of Frederick, the Emperor Napoleon's watch from St. Helena, were all allowed to be inspected ; but should the visitor have passed disrespectfully by one of the many busts of William II, he would call their special attention to the bronze or marble, as the case might be, remarking respectfully as he did so : "His Majesty, my most gracious War Lord."

On the 2nd of October, his first birthday after the war, a patriotic crowd gathered once more outside his house, and sang from morn till eve the 'Deutschland' song, which was still for some time to be the exclusive property of the old nationalists. All day long they cheered him, and when, as not infrequently happened, the cheering was especially enthusiastic, he had to come out and thank them —a somewhat tiring proceeding in the long run.

These exhibitions, it must be admitted, were not got up simply as an amusement or a pastime by the masses, which are always on the lookout for their *circenses*, nor were they by any means solely the outcome of genuine admiration. They were merely the result of the demonstration mania, which was one of the features of the inglorious revolutionary and post-revolutionary period. Liebknecht, Ledebour, Scheidemann and Ebert were the idols of the reds, and their names only had to be mentioned to be cheered mechanically by the processions which paraded the streets almost daily. The nationalists naturally tried to imitate them, but they had no active leader ; as for Hergt, the bureaucratic head of the party of the Right, he was really hardly worth cheering. The old generals, therefore, had to serve as substitutes, but when it came to arousing patriotic and political enthusiasm, Hindenburg outdistanced them all.

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A few weeks later he and the nation were to witness a scene which was rendered doubly dramatic by its challenge to all that was held most sacred by the present and past generations. It was a play in which historical drama and the modern theatre were subtly blended, a play that was full of tremendous action and of human touches in which all the threads of German fate were inextricably involved. The scene was laid before a historical tribunal.

The National Assembly had decided at Weimar to appoint a parliamentary committee of inquiry of its chief orators to investigate the origin of the war, our policy during the same, and the cause of our collapse. Under the Constitution committees of this kind are endowed with judicial powers. Its legal status, however, was very doubtful, and nobody could say whether those who were cited to give evidence appeared in the character of witnesses or defendants.

A defendant, unlike a witness, can refuse to give evidence. Individuals were cited as witnesses whom one party were anxious to incriminate and even in certain eventualities to prosecute for neglect of duty and the other to show off to the very best advantage. The men who had been at the head of affairs during the terrible period between 1914-18 were now to give an account of their stewardship to their successors. Was it to be another case of world-history becoming the judgment of the world? While it would have been absurd of course to have submitted events of such paramount national importance to the investigations of a petty court, the political committee of inquiry ought to have taken every precaution to prevent its proceedings degenerating into a semi-tragic farce.

A year had elapsed since the catastrophe of November. The sad anniversary had acted as a fresh incitement to the irreconcilable antagonists to renew their wild campaign of

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agitation. "War criminals," shouted the Left ; "revolutionary criminals," rejoined the Right. Was it likely under these circumstances that a verdict could be obtained which would illuminate and bring order into the existing chaos ? There were too many doubts to be resolved, too many obscure and conflicting statements to be reconciled.

And indeed even ten years later the huge array of innocent white volumes of the records of the proceedings containing the mass of fluctuating and contradictory statements and evidence had not as yet been completed. True, the essential truths had long since been extracted from this wealth of material and more effectively still from other less compendious sources of information ; but party spirit still ran too high to forego willingly its old unfair campaigning methods.

In November, 1919, a sub-committee of the parliamentary tribunal started upon an investigation of the events leading up to the entry of the United States into the war, and the declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare. Would it succeed in definitely establishing the harm wrought by our military policy ? The democrats of every shade of opinion, or in other words the parties which were responsible for the Constitution of Weimar, were firmly convinced that it would.

In the late autumn of 1916 when the war, in spite of many partially successful offensive and defensive actions, seemed apparently to have come to a standstill a political campaign had begun in which the parties, the Government and the Higher Command had all been concerned. The peace offer which the Emperor had made on the 12th of December, with the more or less reluctant consent of G.H.Q., was an appeal for general reconciliation but had been greeted with contempt and mockery by our adversaries.

The German parties of the Left, who had been listening

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in tense anxiety for such signs of agreement as were faintly perceptible, were anxious in spite of the many rebuffs we had received to start a movement in favour of peace. Our military leaders on the other hand considered that their only hope was to carry on the war with greater intensity, and make a ruthless use of the submarine weapon. Chancellor Bethmann had at last, and quite unexpectedly, agreed to these extreme methods of sea-warfare.

America, however, at once declared war, and though the submarines sank many millions of tons of shipping they had failed to starve out England. And now with a view to establishing the responsibility for the failure of the German military policy the question was asked retrospectively : “ Who had insisted upon the adoption of this disastrous policy ? ” The men of the old régime, who had been in power during the winter of 1916-17, were now to vindicate their action before the newly fledged republican Reichstag.

The scene of this sensational drama was laid on the top floor of the Reichstag, where the budget committee, the ‘ miniature Reichstag ’ from time immemorial, had arranged the course of business, and which was now set apart for the use of the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry.

A huge concourse of interested parties had assembled, professional historians and other experts to give evidence, representatives of the home and foreign press to criticise. A heated exchange of arguments at once began between the witnesses and the committee, which consisted of one representative from each fraction.

Among the members of the committee were the ultra-socialist deputy Cohn-Nordhausen and the socialist deputy Sinzheimer. The nationalists at once made a set at them on account of their Jewish nationality, especially at ‘ Roublecohn,’ who was alleged to have been supplied with money for revolutionary purposes from Moscow. Both of

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these men were sitting on the committee when the statesmen who were in office at that critical turn of the year came forward to give their evidence.

Bethmann-Hollweg, whose depositions and attitude were somewhat feeble, only very occasionally enlivened his otherwise unconvincing statements by turning upon his aggressors. Helfferich on the other hand overwhelmed his cross-questioners with biting irony, incurred repeated fines for his anti-semitic allusions, and lectured the members of the committee as if he had been the Crown prosecutor and they the criminals in the dock. The sitting was one long scene of unrehearsed incidents and deliberate provocations.

Would Hindenburg be cited? The question had been passionately discussed for several weeks both from the tactical and practical point of view. The Government and the Reichstag would have been only too willing to spare the venerable champion so painful a scene. The nationalist opposition was beside itself at the very idea of "Hindenburg's conduct being inquired into." It was almost incredible, even on the part of such scoundrels as the men of Weimar!

It was Ludendorff, however, who insisted upon Hindenburg's presence. Ludendorff knew that he was to be handed down to history as the man who was responsible for the submarine gamble, and it was obvious that a great many people were not unjustifiably anxious to do so. The General who, thanks to the power conferred upon him by the Marshal of which he had taken undue advantage, had been the dictator of Germany for two years, now sought to entrench himself behind Hindenburg's popularity, and nobody could doubt for an instant in view of the Marshal's character that the latter would cover him if requested to do so.

So Hindenburg was coming and the Dioscuri were about

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to enter the lists once more. Germany and the whole of Europe went wild with excitement at the news, for Hindenburg's prestige had not suffered in any way from the great political upheaval.

Thus it came about that a committee-room in one of the top storeys of the Reichstag was the scene of the clash between two generations, one of which was represented by two mighty men of valour, who had gained such glory in war, and the other by a dozen very ordinary individuals, who, however much they differed in their views and their grasp of the subject, nevertheless approached the problems submitted to them in a more independent frame of mind than the two heroes who were too handicapped by their past to be able to do so.

The discussion with Helfferich had been mere wrangling, but now two schools of thought were about to come to grips.

Hindenburg had not the slightest excuse for feeling that he was appearing before the Court in the capacity of a defendant. A special saloon was attached to the train which brought him from Hanover, he was received by a guard of honour, two officers of the regular army were attached to him as honorary aides-de-camp for the duration of his stay in Berlin, and two sentries in steel helmets were posted in front of his quarters.

Unfortunately Hindenburg had accepted the invitation of Helfferich, the deadliest enemy of the new régime, to stay with him at his villa in the Hitzigstrasse, where the bolt was being forged which was to put an end to Erzberger and with him the whole system. There the Marshal found Ludendorff awaiting him. The two men had not met since that fatal 26th of October, 1918, and even their correspondence had been of the very briefest nature.

The arrangements for the appearance of the two military  
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leaders before the parliamentary court of inquiry had been placed in the hands of Helfferich, a thoroughly unreliable adviser, whose main object was to prejudice Hindenburg against the committee at the outset. They both had their hostile declarations ready in their pockets as they drove down the Tiergartenstrasse to the Reichstag. The route was lined with troops, while mounted police rode alongside of them to keep the cheering and hissing crowd in check. When they reached the Königsplatz they were greeted by a storm of cheers and hoots.

The Reichstag was occupied by a strong force, machine guns had been posted at each corner of the building, and the side entrances barricaded with barbed wire. Berlin was still in a very dangerous condition, and only three months later the bullets of the insurgents were to whistle through the lofty windows of the Reichstag and forty corpses to be laid out in its bloodstained courtyard, the victims of the uprising on behalf of economic democracy.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff gravely ascended the flight of stairs which were more accustomed to the footsteps of a busy swarm of politicians. The next time he mounted those steps he would come alone to testify to the State, which he now regarded as his enemy.

The generals were met at the entrance and escorted upstairs by Herr Warmuth, the German national member of the committee, whose presence beside them was another proof of the lines upon which public opinion was divided.

The doors of the crowded hall were flung open to receive them and the audience rose as they entered. Herr Gothein, the chairman of the committee and a member of the democratic party, advanced a few paces towards Hindenburg and held out his hand timidly towards him. He was a mummified veteran of the party of progress, who oscillated between emotionalism and an unnatural severity, a

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curious compound of legal pedantry, obsequiousness and fraternity in the old liberal acceptation of the word.

The Marshal, however, looked over him, for his eye had been caught by the bouquet of white chrysanthemums tied with a black, white and red bow, which adorned the witness box.

"Marshal," chirped Gothein, "we would willingly have spared you the inconvenience of this journey, had not General Ludendorff attached such importance to it."

There was no reply . . . and then the two witnesses took their seats.

Before they were sworn Ludendorff read out a formal legal protest on behalf of Hindenburg and himself. Their status as regards this inquiry, he alleged, was ambiguous : they had decided nevertheless to come forward and give evidence and let the nation and the world hear the truth.

The effect upon the audience of this declaration was distinctly chilling, an impression that was due not so much to Ludendorff's tone of voice, as to the fact that Hindenburg should have associated himself with this unworthy reservation as a means of safeguarding himself against future prosecution. He should have been above doing so ; moreover, as the chairman could not help pointing out, the reservation in question did not affect in any way the actual constitutional issue.

Gothein then began to examine the witness. Hindenburg cleared his throat and unrolled a manuscript ; he would like, he said, to begin by reading an explanation of the reasons of his actions and aims generally during the war. Gothein rejoined by requesting him, in accordance with the general wish of the committee, not to read out a long statement as he, Gothein, could not tell whether it dealt with facts or merely contained an expression of opinion, and the

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committee, he said, attached very little importance to the latter in itself.

Hindenburg then began to read out his statement in a loud and rasping voice, laying the emphasis on the wrong passages as though he were out of sympathy with his audience, while Ludendorff toyed with his horn spectacles.

The Marshal referred at the outset to the unexampled character of the late war. "A general," he went on, "who is not determined to gain the victory for his country must not accept the Supreme Command, unless he receives orders at the same time to capitulate. We had received no such orders. Had we done so, we should have refused to accept the Supreme Command. The Great General Staff was brought up in the doctrines of the great military philosopher, Clausewitz. We look upon war as the continuation of policy by other methods. Our policy of peace was a failure. We didn't want war, and yet the greatest of wars was forced upon us. . . ."

At this point Gothein rang his bell. "An assertion of that kind is an expression of opinion," he said. "I must, therefore, protest against it."

Hindenburg calmly looked the daring pedant up and down, to the intense discomfort of the latter. "In that case," he rejoined in still louder tones, "the historian will have to decide the issue."

"Whereas," his statement continued, "in spite of their superiority the various classes and parties in the enemy countries co-operated, and became more and more united in the resolve to win the war, party interests with us gained the upper hand as our position got worse. . . ."

The chairman interrupted him once more. "That again is an expression of opinion as to the internal political situation."

Without paying the slightest attention to the interrup-

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tion, Hindenburg went on in a voice of thunder that gradually sank to a tone of deep and almost sepulchral menace : " Owing to this our will to victory was undermined."

For the third time Gothein tried in vain to interfere.

" I looked for energy and co-operation, but found pusillanimity and weakness."

Gothein twisted himself into the shape of a mark of interrogation, and exclaimed with a despairing sob : " But that, again, is an expression of opinion." A ripple of laughter went through the audience. The members of the committee on either side of the chairman pulled the disconcerted Gothein down, and Hindenburg was allowed to finish in peace.

In his final conclusion he practically identified himself with the nationalist theory. " Our request for the maintenance of stern discipline and the strict administration of the law was not complied with. Our operations in consequence failed, as they were bound to, and defeat became inevitable ; the revolution was merely the last straw. As an English general very truly said, ' The German Army was stabbed in the back.' There is no need to prove who was responsible."

Thus arose the legend of the ' stab in the back.' Germany had assassinated her army. Where had Hindenburg got his information from ? How could he have known what was going on at home ? He was utterly unacquainted with the mental processes of the masses and Ludendorff had always kept political affairs in his own hands at G.H.Q. Moreover, he only viewed them from the point of view of an amateur, and through glasses that had been discoloured by Pan-Germanic prejudice.

Hindenburg was speaking of what he only knew of by hearsay. It was Ludendorff and Helfferich who had indoctrinated him with the legend of the ' stab in the back,'

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the greatest outrage that could have been perpetrated upon the nation. Never was Hindenburg so weak as when he allowed himself, against his own convictions, to offer this insult to the nation. The abrupt plunge into the black night of defeat had affected Hindenburg so terribly that for a time his military judgment failed him, and there lay the tragedy. His grief overbore his sense of justice. When he recovered himself his judgment was all the riper for the experience he had undergone.

The 'stab in the back,' moreover, in spite of anything that may be said to the contrary, was a theory that was by no means universally subscribed to by our generals at that time. Let us see what that cold calculator and predecessor of Hindenburg, Falkenhayn, has to say on the subject. Shortly before Hindenburg gave his evidence he published a strictly impartial memoir, which contained the following passage. "When Field Marshal von Hindenburg took over the direction of affairs the general situation was serious, as indeed it had always been more or less ever since September 1914, and as it remained until the bitter end. Moreover, in view of the great superiority of our foes in man-power and resources, the situation could never have altered to our advantage unless we had succeeded in breaking their warlike spirit. Nothing, in all probability, contributed more to the miserable outcome of the war than the fact that this information was only revealed to the nation at large when the situation had become irretrievable." He is alluding to Ludendorff.

It must be admitted that others besides former officers of nationalist opinions, who were prompted more by their sympathies than their intelligence, refused to accept such an outspoken admission, involving as it did the acquittal of the homeland from the crimes that had been laid to its charge. The youth of the day, with Strese-

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mann at their head, held very much the same opinions as those expressed by Hindenburg in 1919 with regard to the collapse.

The fury against the traitorous pacifists who were confounded with the 'people' and the 'homeland' was a sentiment which was absolutely incompatible with an exact interpretation of the facts. It was simply a state of mind peculiar to those whose old-fashioned patriotism was too intense to allow of their being amenable to the spirit of another age.

It is only the critics, who ten years later still assert as a fact that the Germans stabbed their army in the back and propagate the myth for purposes of agitation, who have no claims for excuse upon either psychological or circumstantial grounds. For in the meantime the real facts have been thoroughly investigated and made generally acceptable, and the statements contained in the declarations read by Hindenburg and Ludendorff on the 18th of November, 1919, as regards the question of guilt are incorrect in point of fact.

Hindenburg contented himself in the main in his deposition before the Committee of Inquiry with formulating his answers in the shape of pointed accusations. He left the submarine controversy to Ludendorff to deal with, whose sharply metallic voice acted as a continual challenge as he read out his statement. He spoke of the 'defeat at Verdun.' Ah! the assembly whispered, so it was a catastrophe after all. Even in 1919 very little was known about the course of the war, and now another corner of the veil had been lifted.

It was particularly on account of Verdun, he said, that the intensified submarine warfare ought to have been begun much sooner, and this he alleged had always been Hindenburg's opinion; unfortunately our preparations

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were not sufficiently advanced. They had been quite ready to accept the war with America, Holland and Denmark as a necessary evil.

In any case the Higher Command had acted from a sense of duty. Was not that sufficient? Ludendorff referred at this point, without any apparent motive, to some gossip which at the time it must be admitted had not been entirely devoid of reason. He had heard, he said, that the *Vorwärts* had stated somewhere that a complete victory was not in the interests of the social democrats. Search was made in the files of the newspaper, but the passage could not be found. Furthermore, he alleged that Walther Rathenau had given it as his opinion that if ever the Emperor were to ride through the Brandenburger Tor on his white charger at the head of his victorious troops the lessons of history would have been in vain.

And yet was it not this very Rathenau himself who had proclaimed the *levée en masse* when Ludendorff himself had refused to entertain the idea of a popular uprising? Was that all that the latter could produce in the way of incriminating material? He referred to the independent socialists, without, however, adducing any facts, although a great deal of evidence was available against them.

Every one of the belligerents, it might have been replied, had its own revolutionaries of sinister reputation. Moreover, the anxieties inspired by the fear of an overwhelming victory of the imperialist régime had been the subject of many confidential discussions between the members of the patriotic parties of the Left; for there was a general apprehension of a recurrence of *βρισ* on the part of William II, which might well have deprived us of the political fruits of our victory at the eleventh hour. Such conduct may perhaps be termed hare-brained folly, but it

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was not inspired by treacherous intentions, and in any case it had been unproductive of any evil results.

Ludendorff had already been censured several times by the chairman for the vagueness of his accusations, when suddenly one of the experts came forward to take the General's part. It was an aged professor of history, Dietrich Schäfer by name, one of the leading champions of the pan-Germanic movement. This queer-tempered, fiery old gentleman now demanded that the witness should be granted full latitude in giving his evidence. How, he asked, could the historian appreciate the motives which prompted a leading figure like General Ludendorff if the latter was not allowed to speak with unrestrained frankness ? It was not a question of Ludendorff being allowed to abuse whom he liked. A witness who gave evidence before a tribunal was not allowed, of course, to diverge unduly from the point, but in this case it was not a question of a few answers more or less, but of letting Ludendorff reveal himself as he was, which was far more important.

Schäfer, hot-headed though he was, was really quite justified in making his protest, although from the tactical point of view he did his hero a great disservice ; for the more Ludendorff let himself go the more his political incapacity became apparent.

The Committee of Inquiry withdrew to discuss in private. Twenty, thirty, forty minutes elapsed, and still they did not return. The excitement among the audience by this time had reached fever heat. The conversations, which had hitherto been carried on between the various groups in whispers, grew louder and louder and more and more controversial. The two War Gods looked questioningly at one another, apparently delighted at this parliamentary *contretemps*. These civilians who were to give their verdict upon military questions about which they knew nothing

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had been tackled, and, of course, had at once collapsed. What did the backboneless populace expect of men of action like themselves ? They were separated from them by differences which were deeply rooted in the past, by all the distrust which the classes felt for the masses.

At this point the packed committee returned. Of course, they had come to the decision which might have been expected of them ; the warlike professor was turned down, and the skirmishing went on. What about the warnings sent by Count Bernstorff, the German Ambassador in Washington, to Berlin and G.H.Q. ?

Bernstorff, who was a man of the world, had seen the harm that was being done, and had tried to avert the worst consequences and prevent the sacrifice of our friendship with America at the behest of the hotheads at the Admiralty. There sat the Count, with arms and legs crossed in the attitude of chilly superiority of one who unfortunately, very unfortunately, had been right after all.

He had deposed that on his return from a continent that was eagerly preparing for war, the following conversation had taken place between himself and General Ludendorff. " So you wanted to make peace in America ? " had said the latter. " I suppose you thought we were at the end of our tether ? " " No. I wanted to make peace before that happened." " Well, we don't want to."

The ex-Deputy-Chief of the Staff indignantly repudiated the truth of this statement. He had always intensely disliked Bernstorff, he said, on account of the latter's lack of energy and faint-heartedness ; he no doubt had committed his, Ludendorff's, words to memory, because he still thought his interlocutor was a great man.

An icy smile flitted across Bernstorff's furrowed yellow face at this sally, which was greeted by the audience with loud laughter.

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Ludendorff continued to give full rein to his indignation ; his honour, he said, had been besmirched, his conscience was clear : never had he wished to carry on the war for its own sake. No one present had said so, and all the verbosity expended by both sides was completely beside the mark.

Hindenburg felt himself called upon to intervene once more, which he did so violently that the papers flew in all directions. It was disgraceful, he said, to bring such accusations against his faithful comrade ; they would stand and fall together, and each was responsible for the actions of the other. Never, never would he allow a distinction to be drawn between them.

It was now long past noon, and the protagonists were beginning to feel exhausted. Perhaps the sitting might be resumed later on in the afternoon ? Hindenburg gruffly declined to do so ; he had had enough for that day, he said. As he couldn't come the next day or the day after, the committee adjourned *sine die*, an adjournment that everyone tacitly assumed would be permanent, for no one was anxious to prolong so painful a spectacle.

No practical results had been achieved, but much time was to elapse before the echoes aroused by their controversies were finally allayed.

On their return to Helfferich's wigwam, Hindenburg and Ludendorff proceeded to inflict another snub on the Committee of Inquiry. They authorised the newspapers of the parties of the Right to state that they had worn plain clothes, and not their uniforms and orders, because they felt that they would have been paying too great a compliment to some of the members of the Committee of Inquiry, if they had appeared before them in the Prussian garb of honour.

Then came the departure. Once more the Guard of Honour paraded at the Zoo Station. As the Marshal, after

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saluting the Guard, turned to enter the station a knot of patriotic spectators called after him: "Hindenburg must be made President of the Reich." He stopped short, with a brusque gesture as though he were shaking off something disagreeable, and mounted the stairs to the platform.

Some of the students of the High Schools of Hanover managed at the last moment to get wind of the hour of his arrival. They invaded the lecture-rooms shouting "Hindenburg is coming back." Their fellow-students deserted their teachers and rushed to the station to greet their hero with storms of cheers for himself and groans for the politicians in Berlin.

Very shortly afterwards, for time was going by very rapidly, in the following March that is to say, the month of revolutions which began with the Nationalist Putsch, these same lads who had cheered him enlisted as volunteers to help to suppress the communist civil war which had broken out in the Ruhr. The students upon their return demanded insistently to be led past Hindenburg's house, and as the battalion marched past to the strains of the Fridericus March, he stood at the doorway and watched them.

Hindenburg, it should be said, disapproved of the surprise attack upon and capture of Berlin by Captain Ehrhardt's naval brigade. He disliked on principle revolutionary movements in whatever quarter they originated. The Left extremists nevertheless attributed to him the most sinister plans, in spite of his conciliatory admonitions, and when the brief chancellorship of the rebel Kapp had been brought to its close, red mobs collected so frequently near his house that the Reichswehr had to furnish him with a guard of old soldiers who had served as N.C.O.'s in the field.

During his leisure in 1919 the Marshal, who hitherto had  
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been more accustomed to use the sword than the pen, took up the latter, or rather the thick pencil which he habitually used to form his beautifully rounded sentences. So fast did he write, faster indeed than many an experienced man of letters, that within six months, "not from any inclination of my own," as he put it, "but in compliance with the requests and suggestions that had reached him," he had collected sufficient material to fill a volume of four hundred large-sized pages. The book, which appeared under the title *Out of my Life*, was published by the firm of S. Hirzel of Leipsic, the same old firm which in the nineteenth century had published the standard edition in five volumes of Heinrich von Treitschke's famous German history to which so many of our fellow-countrymen in their grief at the downfall of Prussia and Germany were now turning for consolation.

Hindenburg's recollections, very much against the wish of their author, created an enormous sensation ; the final impression made by them upon the mass of readers, however, was one of abiding value. In the meantime Ludendorff's War Memoirs had appeared, in which the military aspect of the problems was far more exhaustively treated than in those of Hindenburg, but which revealed their author in a far less dignified aspect.

No sooner had Hindenburg's memoirs appeared than extracts were telephoned all over Germany and some of the principal chapters were actually transmitted orally by the representatives of the provincial press to their newspapers, in which they appeared on the following morning.

His presentation of events, which moreover was almost entirely the work of his own hands, more than fulfilled expectations. One felt that it was not the work of some disputatious chief of the staff who was solely bent on demonstrating an hypothesis that would redound to his own

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credit, but of a man whose greatness was compounded of simplicity and modesty and who never made the smallest attempt to excuse his own shortcomings. True, he still believed in the 'stab in the back,' but at any rate he disguised the bitter legend in semi-mythical semi-poetical language. "Our worn-out front," he wrote, "collapsed as Siegfried did beneath the spear thrust of the treacherous Hagen." He concluded his confessions by a bold but practical flight of the imagination into the future. "Comrades," he wrote, "of our once so proud and mighty army, can you really talk about despairing? Think of the men who were responsible for the moral revival of our Fatherland more than a hundred years ago. Religion to them meant belief in themselves and in the sacredness of their cause. They created a new Fatherland not by pushing some uncongenial theory to extremes, but upon the basis of the unfettered development of the individual so far as it was compatible with the welfare of and his duty to the community at large. Germany will follow in their steps once more, as soon as she can walk." Thus was the fusion effected between the past and the future, indeed, the time was not far distant when he would be able to appreciate the institutions created at Weimar at their true value from the point of view of the national interest.

Just about this time the Entente renewed their demands for the surrender of the Emperor and the other 'war criminals.' The Government of the Reich, which in this one critical question was supported whole-heartedly by the whole nation, refused obstinately to comply with this request. Hindenburg had written to Foch the hostile Commander-in-Chief, as one honourable soldier to another, to beg him to induce the victorious powers to observe a more chivalrous attitude: as for himself, he added, he would willingly sacrifice himself instead of his Emperor.

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The following reply which he gave to a deputation of students that came to beseech him not to allow himself to be handed over to the vengeance of the French is eloquent of his stoical resignation. "If they want to shoot an old man like myself, who has only done his bounden duty and nothing more, then let them take me."

Foch never replied to the letter although he could have done so without incurring the charge of attempting to interfere in politics : he probably felt that although he had triumphed over Hindenburg, it was he and not Hindenburg who had emerged with least credit from the incident.

Can we wonder if the old man's temper occasionally got the better of him in view of the perpetual humiliations inflicted upon Germany by France ? One summer's day he was visited by a boy's band from another part of Germany, who played the Entry into Paris March in his honour. He expressed his thanks as follows : " You are all of you quite young and you have played me the Entry into Paris March very nicely. I hope, however, that you will live to play it where it ought to be played, where I was in 1870." No doubt he was tempted for a moment by his resentment, but who can find it in his heart to blame the old soldier for forgetting the political importance which attached to everything he said ?

His strength and presence of mind were shown in connection with the only dangerous attempt that was ever made upon his life ; an attempt be it said which was devoid of any political motive. One evening in the middle of summer an area thief sneaked in through the open verandah door. Hindenburg came upon the man from behind and asked him sternly what he wanted. The thief was too astonished to do more than stammer, and before he could reply the octogenarian had caught hold of him by the coat and was leading him into the next room where the bell was.

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The man struggled, drew his revolver and fired ; the bullet, however, missed Hindenburg's chest by a finger's breadth and buried itself in the wall. "Now we'll talk a different language," shouted the Marshal in his deep voice as he rushed at the burglar. Over and over they rolled, Hindenburg holding his adversary by the wrist to prevent him firing again. For some time they struggled desperately till at last the butler in the basement heard the noise and hurried upstairs, when the criminal was overpowered and disarmed. Hindenburg had to attend the Court to give evidence. The criminal swore that he was quite unaware whom he was dealing with and expressed his repentance. Hindenburg begged that he might be leniently dealt with ; the distress he said was great and owing to the length of the war humanity had become brutalised.

His guardian angel had protected him, but the angel of death was approaching his wife. That fond and cheerful heart which was so full of humour and courage, gave way at last, under the strain of repeated operations. She died on the 14th of May 1921. The whole of Hanover and Germany sympathised with the lonely man in his grief. The town presented him with a burial place in the cemetery of Stöcken, a circular clearing picturesquely situated on rising ground with a hedging of dense undergrowth and a turfed space in the centre. There they laid her on the right of the place which awaits him when he has fulfilled his political mission of which no one as yet had the smallest premonition.

On the afternoon of the burial the citizens of Hanover, black coated and bare headed, lined the long funeral route. When the sternly impassive old man threw the three handfuls of earth upon the coffin, even the hard-bitten warriors near him broke down. Alas ! when he wished to express his thanks to his fellow-citizens through the press the social

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democrats hardened their hearts and refused to insert the announcement in their papers. Only a portion of his fellow-townsmen and, as the elections were to show, that only a minority, stood by him.

After the assassination of the Foreign Minister Rathenau the country was swept once more by a wave of radicalism, a movement which the government, that was composed of the parties of the Left if anything, promoted by proclaiming that "the Right was the enemy," a very dangerous slogan and one that was naturally appropriated by the communists. The head of the Hanoverian Soviet accused the Marshal at a meeting of the Town Council of being the secret head of a nationalist "league of assassins." Bolshevik mobs demonstrated in the streets and demanded Hindenburg's immediate removal from Hanover.

He listened calmly to the reports he received and told his friends : "It may be that they will get rid of me sooner or later : if so I shall have my dear wife disinterred and go and live in East Prussia."

As it turned out, however, he never had to leave Hanover against his will. Until the nation summoned him to emerge from his retirement he never left the town on the Leine, except to visit his friends or travel for his amusement. He had been let off his lead<sup>1</sup> once more, he once said with a grin at his pun when staying with his relations, many of whom lived in the neighbouring provinces. At mid-summer he went 'on leave' as he still called it, not without a good deal of justification, for at Hanover he was perpetually in request to perform some ceremonial 'duty.'

It was impossible for him to visit what may be called the public summer resorts, for the visitors never left him alone from morn till eve, and looked upon him as their

<sup>1</sup>Leine, the river on which Hanover is built, is the German word for dog-lead.

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open-air theatre to which entrance was free. Once he had tried to do so, in 1920, when he and his wife and their son had made their last journey together to the Harz. No sooner, however, had the three Hindenburghs sat down on a bench, a tree trunk or rock to rest than they found a camera levelled at them.

Now that he was a widower he accepted an invitation to the Bavarian Mountains almost every summer. In the depths of the forest, two hours by road from the railway to Tölz, with the chain of the Alps as a background to it, stands the ancient monastery of Dietramszell, whose towers are flanked on either side by more comfortable buildings. This fortified monastery had belonged to the Augustine friars up to the days of Napoleon, when it passed into the possession of the von Schilchers, a family with which Hindenburg was connected by the closest ties of friendship. The woods climb up sharply behind the house to the higher ground where the chamois play among the crags.

Hindenburg still felt himself quite equal to taking part in these hill stalks, and gladly accepted the invitation of Duke Louis, the son of the famous oculist, Charles Theodore, whenever he was asked to go chamois hunting. And subsequently, ever since his election to the Presidency, he returns every year to Dietramszell immediately after the state festivities and ceremonies of the 11th of August, the birthday of the Republic.

This astonishing old octogenarian, unlike the majority of aged chief magistrates or the prematurely old or people of advancing years, never finds it necessary to take the waters of Gastein or Karlsbad in order to restore his youth.

Nearly six years, however, were to elapse before the old gentleman who had packed away his field-marshall's baton in the knapsack of his memories in 1919 had again to

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obtain official leave from his responsible duties. And what a terrible period of national intoxication and depression these six years were.

In the meantime, our hero, unconscious of the future which awaited him, by dint of quiet but unceasing reflection was gradually reaping the noblest of all fruits, namely that of experience. From being a man of action he had become a man of wisdom. Whereas in 1919 he could still react after the manner of Ludendorff, by 1925 he had raised himself to the position of the *senex imperator* of peace.

## CHAPTER X

### THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATURE

WHEN the National Assembly first saw the light at Weimar amid the gloom which marked the end of a period of German history and the birth of a new era, and the young Republic which had been born amid national dissolution sought to shape its organisation on a democratic basis, one question above all others occupied the minds of those assembled in the birth chamber. Who was to succeed William II and become the President of the popular State ? Was there anyone who still doubted that Ebert would be appointed provisionally as head of the State as the natural outcome of the birth pains of the three preceding months ?

The lying-in hospital where the National Constitution was being born was, however, being assailed by innumerable proposals from outside of a very different nature. Telegrams arrived demanding the bestowal of the new civic crown upon Hindenburg ; whereat the revolutionary groups were convulsed with mirth.

Their laughter was tactless, and the occasion which gave rise to it was anything but absurd. True, Hindenburg as the man who symbolised the war and the most eminent representative of the previous régime could not possibly be put forward as a candidate, either at a time when everything was in the melting pot or probably on any future occasion. But politicians would do well not to mock at

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improbabilities, for in the event of the latter materialising subsequently they are bound to look somewhat foolish.

For a multitude of good reasons connected both with domestic and external policy, Hindenburg could not then have shepherded the German nation into the future. Those, however, who thought they could avert such an eventuality by mere ridicule, neither knew the man with whom they were dealing nor realised the needs of a nation that was almost irreconcilably divided against itself. But did the parties of the Right, who followed the old man with such affection, really know their hero ? Emphatically they did not.

When during the years of passionate debate about the form of government he admonished them from his dignified retreat after the manner of Schiller's Attinghausen to hold together, the red, white and black hot-heads thought he was preaching reaction. That an old man who was so deeply rooted in the far-distant past could be capable of interpreting the consecrated phraseology about impartiality in a manner corresponding with the essential needs of the times and of genuine humanity was more than his warmest admirers either suspected or desired.

As time went on Ebert proved himself increasingly worthy of the providential mission assigned to him of realising what was feasible, rather than of pursuing what was unattainable. From being a Jacobinical socialist he gradually developed into a *petit bourgeois* and an adherent of law and order, and ultimately into a patrician and a gentleman. This man of the people never showed the smallest signs of that empty pomposity which is such a disappointing feature in so many parvenus. He never lost his sympathy with the masses who had raised him to the position he occupied, indeed he was deeply grieved to think how little he could do to improve the position of the pro-

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letariat. In course of time he came to realise more and more that even a socialist in office could not defy the laws of capitalism.

The part played by Ebert during the latter period of his presidency was exactly that of a business trustee. The last two governments appointed by him liquidated the socialist legislation of the war and the revolution. Private enterprise triumphed, industry was freed from its shackles, capitalism was stabilised, and the public funds were no longer considered as existing merely for the purpose of relieving destitution. Schacht and Luther, both of them strict adherents of the very best traditions of capitalism, reduced the monetary circulation and confined it within traditional economic limits. The economic conception of the bourgeoisie prevailed ; Schacht refused to allow the politicians to interfere with the Reichsbank while the Minister of Finance and Chancellor Luther proceeded successfully to abolish economically unproductive organisations, and to make huge reductions of personnel.

The bourgeoisie, both of the older and the younger school, had no cause to dislike Ebert, who was compelled to give his approval to almost everything. The socialists submitted to their own nominee ; for their leaders realised the honesty of his views and the inevitability of the measures he had to assent to. His own trade-union in the meantime had repudiated him. When every allowance has been made, however, there is no denying that the social democrats showed far greater self-control with regard to Hindenburg than the nationalists were to do at a later period.

Ebert's political services in any case are incontestable. Although he got the worst of it economically, there can be no denying that he came very near triumphing politically. The democratic revolution never culminated in a dictator-

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ship. The safety-valve of public discussion was never shut down. At many critical moments during his six years of leadership the danger of absolutism suddenly raised its head, once even the Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Republic actually held the executive authority in his hands. At an earlier date during the Kapp Putsch the Government had been compelled to fly southwards at dawn. During the wild excitement at the end of the inflation period, it seemed as if the prosaic cause of constitutionalism would succumb to the star of the Soviets or the Swastika.

The 'legal' agitation carried on by the Pan-Germanic royalists and the discontented agrarian and industrial magnates, not to mention the increasing fury of the French promoters of the separatist campaign in Western Germany, had threatened more than once to subvert the Reich of Ebert. And yet: Ebert made good and the democratic structure of Weimar was not upset. The result was due to his supple tenacity. But for him we might have witnessed if not a permanent reaction at any rate some very dangerous incidents, which would have been paid for very dearly. At any rate he manœuvred so well that he never failed to maintain a certain if somewhat unsteady mean, and to hold the balance evenly between the two contending parties.

His political account closed with a considerable surplus. The provisional nature of his powers proved a steady element, and amid all the kaleidoscopic changes of a régime born of an emergency he was the one centre round which all could rally. It was he who founded the Reich, and maintained himself at the head of it by his wise but self-denying renunciation of his original intention to introduce a collectivist system of socialism.

Why try an unknown man when an experienced candi-

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date was available, who had so successfully defended the attainable ? No doubt he had not been uniformly successful and bore the scars of his defeats. In any case, prophesying was a poor game. What candidate could be more acceptable to all parties ? Even the German Nationals would hesitate to attack the Republican trenches if Ebert was in command of the latter. The game wasn't worth the candle. Moreover, some of their own men, unwillingly and half-heartedly enough it must be confessed, had actually joined the Government.

Suddenly Ebert was called away in the pride of his manhood. He succumbed to a short but treacherous ailment. An ill-disposed and popularity-hunting judge had termed him a traitor, a cry that was taken up by a chorus of evil-minded and spiteful foes. His friends in their fury would have it that he had been cut to the heart by this infamy, and that he had died the victim of defamation. His death, however, was from natural causes, although there can be no doubt that he was suffering at the time from acute depression.

And now flags were flying at half-mast in Berlin, throughout Germany, and in every capital of the world. The son of the proletariat was buried with almost regal honours. Warriors in their steel helmets mounted guard over the coffin, which was shrouded in the black, red and gold flag. The funeral procession with its escort of cavalry halted beneath the steps of the Reichstag, where the politicians bade farewell to their old champion. The pylons flared, the street lamps were hung with crape, and workmen and young lads, the militants of the republic, lined the streets as the founder of the new German Reich passed by. The farewell speeches addressed to his memory consecrated as it were for the first time the new political order of things. A temporary arrangement had ended and with it a period

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of history. What next ? What would the next few moons bring forth ? A newly-created state, whose citizens as yet hardly definitely realized the outward form and inward meaning of its institutions, was far more dependent upon the intelligence and the perspicacity of the individual at its head than a firmly-seated popular Government with long and healthy traditions. The German Republic had no experience as yet of 'direct' democracy, no president of the Reich had as yet been elected by popular suffrage. Ebert had been appointed by the National Assembly in virtue of the powers conferred upon it by a short emergency constitution, and the Reichstag had never troubled to have his election confirmed by a plebiscite.

Who was to be the successor of the founder of the Reich at Weimar ? The question was all the more urgent in view of the uncertainty of the future. Only those who are familiar with the complicated machinery of parliamentary and government policy can form an idea of the extent of the legal attributions of the head of the state, let alone of the dictatorial powers of which he can avail himself with a very good show of right should he elect to interpret them with an authoritative bias.

It was a period of universal distrust and each school of thought stood by its champion. Negotiations proved fruitless—parties were divided and sub-divided : Ludendorff, to the horror of many of his former admirers, announced that he was going to stand as the representative of the Racist enemies of the state ; his extremist counterpart among the communists was the robust transport worker Thälmann. The Catholic Centre put forward its old political dignitary Marx, and the democratic party Professor Hellpach, a clever *littérateur*, while the social democrats nominated their very efficient head of the Prussian Government, Otto Braun. The exception was formed by

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the two chief and more or less affiliated groups of the Right, which put forward Jarres as the joint nationalist candidate to the cry of 'red, white and black'; some of the smaller independent groups of the Right also supported him.

The electoral battle resolved itself into a huge puff of the various candidates. The advertisers vacuously belaboured their drums. It was a useless competition in expenditure. No one could win this steeplechase: discord made the going too heavy. Jarres led, but when the poll was declared, even he was found to be short of the few million votes which he needed to win on points. So the race had to be re-run and the candidates formed up for their second and final start.

The three parties who had founded the Reich at Weimar now joined forces under the name of the 'Popular Block'; as such they claimed to be Ebert's political heirs. The leader of the Centre, Herr Marx, an acute tactician and for the duration of this campaign at least the oracle of the entire constitutional Left, now advanced at the head of a great array with the 'Reichsbanner,' the leagued supporters of the Republic, as his bodyguard, to fight the decisive battle.

The Right as yet was completely at a loss how to counter this *levée en masse* of black, red and gold. Jarres could not defeat the 'Popular Block': his nationalist 'Reichs-block' was weaker and also far from cohesive. It was the early history of the Republic which formed the intellectual link between the parties of Weimar. Marx indeed was not surrounded by any halo of personal popularity; but he stood for the principles of the Government of 1919, and they were popular enough.

And after all who was Jarres? What had he to show as compared with Marx?

He had been a minister, but that didn't amount to much. He was, however, a first class administrator, a fearless  
"no"

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patriot who had shown his courage in dealing both with the communists and the French invaders, and well known for constitutional punctilio. All this was to his credit, but it was not enough to fire the imagination, for the actual programme of the parties which supported him was too nebulous and too shrouded in phrases which were susceptible of varying interpretations. Was he really a republican or not ? The value of his patriotic and constitutional asseverations was compromised by too many 'ifs' and 'buts.' Lacking straightforwardness his appeal failed in its effect.

Among the leading spirits of the 'Reichsblock,' which was termed somewhat ironically the 'Electoral College,' there were a good many hotheads. The National Liberals, their more moderate and acquiescent allies, were anxious to stand or fall by Jarres. Were they to admit that Jarres was no longer good enough and that someone else, General von Seeckt for instance, was the best man ? Would it be so terrible after all if Marx were to win ? He too would co-operate again with the Right, if the majority were in favour of such a course. Ebert had done so, and what is more the Right were taking part in the Government of the Reich. So why should not Jarres be honourably defeated if necessary ?

Such were the views of Stresemann's party. The German nationals, however, were not to be deterred from looking out for a 'Saviour.' He would have to be a man of a certain age and reputation who derived his authority from the eminent part he had played in the heroic period of German history that had just closed. A 'saviour' who would put an end to the detestable system of Weimar, hold office as the *locum tenens* of the monarchy, restore the sinking spirits of the imperialists and re-establish class government in a form that would be respected

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A sabreur was needed to deal with these long-winded democrats—in the opinion of the ‘United Patriotic Associations,’ a nationalist body which consisted of a number of retired generals with a large following of reactionary place-hunters. If such a hero could be found let him stand forth! Such sentiments, of course, were not avowed openly but only in hole-and-corner fashion. But a week had gone by and time was pressing, and no ‘saviour’ had as yet turned up.

At last a few of the bolder spirits came forward with their proposal. It was an idea that had long been pondered and discussed in secret. The most venerable hero of a former age—who was known to every schoolgirl, whose picture hung in countless houses, cottages, workshops, offices and inns: Hindenburg, of course; Hindenburg our Nestor and hero; he was the man! With him as leader the Republic might be conquered. Wasn’t it worth risking?

Many of the members of the ‘Electoral College’ were stunned by the startling nature of the proposal. Others in spite of their admiration for the boldness of the conception shrugged their shoulders sceptically. Would he even agree to stand? Did he know anything about it? And what about his age and the effect abroad? Jarres too had still to be disposed of. The Hindenburg idea was a figment of the imagination, a dream which would be followed by an unpleasant awakening!

Certain intermediaries who were closely connected with the Marshal made very cautious inquiries in Hanover on behalf of the German National party. He declined laconically with a shake of his great white head. He had never, he said, been a party man and had no intention of becoming one so very late in life. In fact, he received the proposal if anything rather ungraciously. He felt in his

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heart of hearts that he was being exploited for party purposes. Besides, his health was none of the best just then : he was worn out by loneliness and lack of occupation. He was afflicted moreover by a bronchial catarrh which obstinately refused to yield to treatment. Also, he had begun to experience a certain dislike and almost apprehension of appearing in public.

The Presidential election, as it was, had already given him bother enough. He had been deeply affected by Ludendorff's grotesque appearance in the field as the candidate at the first ballot of a noisy group, a candidature which his own supporters if anything regarded rather in the light of a joke. Hindenburg had written an imploring letter to Munich, entreating the General to abandon his intention. Never before in his life, he said, had he asked of him a favour, and this would be the first and last time he would do so. His letter and his entreaties had both been in vain. So he was going to keep out of it and he would be much obliged if he were left out of their party combinations. He was not going to be made an exhibition of merely to suit a party committee.

The 'electors' were told that he had not definitely turned down the proposal, an inference that can be drawn from any refusal that is not couched in sufficiently ungracious terms. He could only be induced to assent, so his German National suitors declared, if official representations were made to him, if the 'Reichsblock,' on behalf of the nation and as representing the patriotic elements within it, were to make a solemn and above all a non-party appeal to him. The 'electors' had hardly had time to make up their minds when Jarres, whose candidature had obviously become impossible, withdrew. He begged them not to consider his personal feelings, in fact he extricated himself with great propriety from a very awkward predicament.

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The Reichsblock comforted itself with the dubious hope that Hindenburg would let himself be over-persuaded, and Admiral of the Fleet von Tirpitz was despatched to visit him. The two paladins of the monarchy were almost of an age and were well acquainted with one another, although of fundamentally different natures. Tirpitz, besides never believing half that he said himself, was a skilled actor and a practised deceiver. Hindenburg on the other hand was a man who dealt with every proposal put before him straightforwardly and without prejudice. The 'call of his country' he regarded as the most sacred appeal that could be made to him, and not as mere political small change to be flung about as required.

It was not a question of party politics or of a political candidature, muttered sly old 'Tirps' into his flowing silvery beard ; the nationalists of Germany in a body were impetuously crying out for the man of Tannenberg to come and save them. Would he refuse to yield to the united entreaties of the patriotic sections of the nation who so urgently needed his help ? Had he not always looked upon subordination to the general welfare as the highest form of duty ? If he could no longer obey the call of the King, the Fatherland was entitled to demand that sacrifice of him.—Thus Tirpitz in his tremolo voice, and as Hindenburg listened in deep emotion his conscience smote him.

The clever old Admiral had caught him by his sword-knot, the sublimest symbol to a Prussian of devotion to duty. Well, if the situation was really as described, if he was needed, if any action of his, old and feeble though he was, could help to allay the national discord, they could count on him. He no longer hesitated. Duty was duty and nothing else of any consequence. He consented without even inquiring as to his prospects. They were quite immaterial. If they wanted him he was at their disposal : if he were

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defeated, he would only have done what he owed to himself in view of the appeal that had been made to him.

The news spread like wildfire to Berlin, throughout the country, and round the world, and was received everywhere with the greatest excitement. Only a small minority had attached the smallest credence to the earlier rumours : such astonishing tidings took some time to digest even in an age of rapid changes.

As the days went by the uproar increased till it swelled to a chorus in which the notes of joy, anxiety, anger, indeed of every emotion, were plainly perceptible. The exultation of one party was equalled only by the gloomy forebodings of its opponents ; as for the Left, it was beside itself with fury at the success of Tirpitz's electoral intrigue.

It was a great venture, a huge experiment, as the more cautious members of the Right fully realised. If all went well, if Hindenburg was elected and could remain at the wheel throughout the storm, if this captain was obeyed by his crew while he guided the battered ship of state through uncharted seas, if he did not collapse and from sheer weariness hand over the command to others more rash than himself, if, if . . . .

In that event, of course, they would be all right ! It was indeed a risk ; but now they could only hold their tongues and look as if they liked it. It was too late to go back and abandon this fabulous experiment. Such were the reflections cautiously expressed in nationalist circles which were not entirely out of touch with current opinion.

The idea was enthusiastically received from the outset only by those who subsequently were to be painfully undeceived, who were either too narrow-minded to conceive him otherwise than as a militarist or who hoped, under cover of his imposing name, to destroy the Republic root and branch at no matter what cost to themselves.

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Such mad and topsy-turvy aspirations were even expressed openly in places. The *Deutsche Zeitung* for instance, which was one day to be the organ of the anti-Hindenburg *fronde*, declared openly

“ Raise thy mighty fist  
And pulverise the mob  
That has taken possession of our country.  
Cleanse our German house  
Of foreign vermin.  
Drive them out with fire and sword.”

He was in fact to expel ‘the Jewish democracy,’ as he had once expelled the Russians. The more sensibly-minded of the younger generation, who although republican by education were fundamentally conservative at heart, raised a warning voice against this nationalist frenzy. You will live to be surprised yourselves, they said, at Hindenburg the ‘German marvel’; he’s the last man to allow himself to be exploited by a gang of adventurers, he will endow the new form of Government with traditions and consolidate the new political order by his exemplary loyalty. He has still to pass through some strange crises, the origin of which will not be inherent in Hindenburg’s nature but will be due rather to those ghosts of the past which have hitherto dogged his footsteps.

The Left was far from realising the guarantees which Hindenburg’s character afforded them for the consolidation of ‘their’ state. True the electoral contest was going on and they had no time for reflection. Material interests, victory, the success of their own candidate were the only things to be thought of. The ‘People’s Block’ indeed had suffered shipwreck, for the people were behind Hindenburg too—in far greater numbers and in a far finer sense than had been the case with Jarres. Hindenburg was supported by the non-political voters, the unorganised

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masses who followed no party cry, but sentimentally adored their hero. The 'People's Block' suddenly found itself forced to conduct its campaign by means of unpopular arguments.

What could be alleged against Hindenburg? He was honesty personified. He had remained faithful to the old Reich, but had not refused his aid to the new one. Had he never been entrapped into uttering some unguarded expression, such as occasionally escapes even the most self-possessed among us?

Once when he was Commander-in-Chief he had told someone at Kreuznach that the war suited him like a summer holiday. It was a feeble attempt on his part to be humorous. But even a sensitive man, as undoubtedly he was, may be pardoned if under the influence of the war-complex and especially amid Pan-German surroundings, he failed on one single occasion to strike the right note. This misplaced remark was now served up against him. It was the only discovery that could be made to his disadvantage.

In vain did the press of the Left pour out their crocodile tears of compassion. The poor dear old Marshal! To think of his being exploited in this disgraceful way by the wirepullers! It was a shame that they should be allowed to play such a frivolous, undignified game with the venerable old gentleman. Jarres was jeered at as the deputy reservist. The *Vorwärts* published a cartoon in which Tirpitz was dragging Hindenburg dressed as a doll in general's uniform along the street, and spitting into Jarres' hat who was sitting in the gutter. The socialist press published a rhyme which holds the record for unscrupulousness, and far exceeded the worst excesses of the Nationalists. This repulsive composition read as follows:

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"If you want the profiteers  
To have a good time,  
And the patriots to hunger,  
The rich to get richer,  
And the children to die of starvation,  
You've only one thing to do—  
To vote for Hindenburg."

Other pettifogging arguments, such as the allegation that Hindenburg's period of usefulness had expired and that a monarchist was out of place as President of the Republic, were put forward to influence the electors. Such were the cheap and either inefficient or unfair weapons used by the 'Marxians' in their attempt to glorify not Karl Marx, but Wilhelm Marx the candidate.

The most serious objection was the anger expressed in political circles abroad at Hindenburg's candidature. In France mistrust, fear and suspicion were instantly aroused; a fact that is anything but surprising. France had staggered for years under Hindenburg's blows. What other programme could he advocate than that of revenge for his retreat in the autumn of 1918? The French felt themselves isolated after their victory. They were in danger of losing their position of hegemony on the Continent. Hindenburg! The very name seemed to recall not the second but the first Versailles, which he had witnessed as a subaltern. "Behind him," wrote the *Temps*, "are enlisted all the forces of reaction and revenge, who hope that he will hasten the day of Germany's military resurrection."

The French, moreover, had made the surprising discovery that the episode furnished a striking analogy with the history of their own third republic. Marshal MacMahon, whose Tannenberg had been won at Magenta, was a monarchist who for years had pursued reactionary plans of a subversive nature while at the head of the third republic, but had

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failed in the long run to prevail against the forces of progress. What if Hindenburg were to assume the rôle of MacMahon in Germany ? In view of the alleged 'war mentality' of the Germans, Europe would be plunged once more into confusion were he to do so. Democracy in Germany, the French asserted, was pure make-believe and merely the result of her defeat. Hindenburg stood for the re-birth of Germany. The Paris press excitedly demanded securities, pledges, controls, while angry ministers anxiously deliberated at the Elysée.

Even in England a lot of nonsense was talked for some time about this fresh challenge to the world on the part of Hindenburg and Germany : official circles on the Thames, however, observed a discreet silence. At a no-distant future, indeed, Hindenburg was to be called in London a 'fine old man.' A great English Sunday newspaper pointed out even at that early stage that Hindenburg, like the Duke of Wellington in England a hundred years previously, was considered the best and most typical representative of national life in Germany.

In America the new event in German history was regarded from an exclusively American point of view. Provided Germany dealt with her obligations in a fair and businesslike manner, anyone might occupy the Presidential palace for all that Wall Street cared. In any case, Hindenburg was decidedly anti-Bolshevist. No advances would be made to 'red' political adventurers, or to sabre-rattlers either for that matter.

The German adherents of the Marx Block did their best to elicit unfavourable pronouncements from the oracles in the United States. Expressions of opinion adverse to Hindenburg's leadership were extorted from American financial magnates, and then cabled back to Berlin in an exaggerated form in order to create prejudice against the

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candidate of the Right. These manœuvres, however, very soon defeated their own ends, and long before polling day it was well known in Germany that the Americans declined to be influenced by political or personal considerations, and would only entertain such requests for loans as were sound business propositions. As the *New York World* in summing up pithily remarked : " Hindenburg symbolises the refusal of the German people to occupy permanently an inferior position in Europe."

In the meantime Germany had been celebrating Easter amid political turmoil. The usual reflections of the German press upon the Resurrection were accompanied by the question whether everything now was about to change in Germany. The springtime hopes of the public moved in two diametrically opposite directions. One party termed 'reaction' what the other termed 'progress.' Hindenburg, his Nationalist followers declared, stood for progress : Marx, affirmed the adherents of the black, red and gold, would build up the future upon the foundations laid by Ebert.

Hindenburg himself was chary of giving promises. His Easter message to the German people was no less remarkable for its complete lack of pretentious verbosity than for the simplicity and directness of the language and the unmistakable genuineness of the feelings of its author. "When I was a soldier," he said, "I never considered party interests but always the nation as a whole. Parties are necessary in a state with a parliamentary form of government, but the head of the state must stand above them and administer his office in complete independence in the interests of the citizens at large. I have never lost my belief in the German people nor in divine assistance. I am too old, however, to entertain any hopes of a sudden reversal of our fortunes. No war, no uprising, can free from its chains a nation like ours, which is so unhappily

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divided against itself. Years of quiet and uninterrupted labour are needed. . . .

"The first president, while acting as guardian of the constitution, remained faithful to his origin as a socialist and a workman; and similarly no one will expect me to abandon my own political convictions. . . .

"To every patriotic German who thinks nationally and desires to maintain the dignity of Germany at home and abroad and preserve religious and social peace, I would extend the hand of fellowship and say: 'Come and play your part in the revival of our Fatherland!'"

No carefully-balanced statement this, trammelled by a mass of detail, nor an attempt to inveigle voters by illusory promises, but an essence distilled from the secret processes of thought. He was not going to try to please everybody, or merely do something because it was up to date. His long experience told him, of course, that it was impossible suddenly to alter the existing order of things. How much shallower than this unambiguous manifesto sounded the appeal of the 'Reichsblock' which culminated in the rhetorical assertion: "Who is for Hindenburg? Everyone who desires to see honesty, integrity, the sense of duty and expert knowledge given that credit which formerly was their due."

It was all so obvious, and yet not enough.

The Field Marshal spent his Easter in the country near Lüneburg in the hope of deriving sufficient benefit from the refreshing silence of moor and woodland and the bracing Lower Saxon spring to be able to withstand the fatigues of the impending campaign. But the sensation-mongers dogged his footsteps, and photographers followed him into his quiet retreat. The film-turners wouldn't even let him walk as he liked through the woods, and though it was close time tried to make him carry a gun!

Upon his return to Hanover he found policemen outside  
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his villa ; the crowds outside had increased so enormously that the bell on the garden gate had had to be disconnected. The curious, the impertinent, the eccentric and others whose time hung heavily on their hands, lay in wait for him in the hope of buttonholing him and compelling him to enter into conversation with them or invite them inside his house, where perhaps they could get hold of souvenirs or even proffer him advice which would redound to their credit. Such is the curse of modern notoriety. The genuine enthusiasts and his sincere admirers knew where to draw the line between homage and importunity, and kept at a respectful distance.

The mass of business was dealt with by his political staff, for the flood of correspondence was steadily rising. Every post brought sackfuls of written matter, and his mail attained the proportions of that of a Government Office.

The 'Reichsblock' had opened a branch establishment at the Königlicher Hof hotel, and kept the main press of business away from the Marshal. Lieutenant-Colonel von Feldmann acted as it were as his Chief of the Staff, while two civilian adjutants dealt with the routine work and the political propaganda. The postal authorities could not sort his correspondence, but lumped everything together that bore the name of Hindenburg. The thousands of envelopes that arrived contained matters of importance, as well as a great deal of rubbish. Who, for instance, had written this letter ? Was that communication of sufficient importance to be submitted to Hindenburg ?

Superficially regarded, his correspondence had been equally voluminous during the war, when he was the most popular man in Germany. The national spirit, however, as the contents of his letters clearly proved, had undergone a great change. Naturally the poetical enthusiasts turned up once more with compositions that exceeded Goethe's

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poems in length. Some of them even inflicted their presence upon the over-worked volunteers, and sought to give a convincing proof of the excellence of their rhymes by reciting them aloud in their presence. And, of course, forcible expressions of encouragement *à la Wilhelm* were not lacking.

Nevertheless, for the first time a curiously brutal sense of reality seemed to prevail in Germany, which sometimes indeed displayed itself in almost indecent fashion. The interested parties put their questions very coolly. Is it your Excellency's intention to take up this or that matter if you are elected? A tenants' association asked him to give them the assurance that he would prevent any further rise in rents. The landlords asked him to pledge himself to the contrary. One athletic association asked Hindenburg if he was in favour of granting them free railway passes to their tournaments. The holders of state loans expected him to restore their loan certificates to par value. The temperance party asked him if he was prepared at once to forbid the use of any 'poisonous and intoxicating' liquors. The Bavarians, of course, tried to convince him of the urgent need for reducing the beer-tax. Architects favoured him with plans for an up-to-date arrangement of his house. Amateur world reformers sent him their drafts of a new constitution.

The Father of the Reichstag, a social democrat of the name of Bock, wrote to tell him that he knew from his own experience that a man of nearly eighty was past work, and that he, Hindenburg, ought therefore to withdraw. The question of age was, indeed, a very absorbing problem for Germany about this time. Youth was at a premium, and the elderly tried to assume an appearance at any rate of youthfulness. The struggle for home and subsistence was putting a terrible strain upon the vital forces of the nation,

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and employers were giving way to the cruel temptation of turning away men of forty as too old for work.

Hindenburg's example was a very effective argument with which to combat this dangerous belief in the inefficiency of old age. Elderly men of all classes who still felt strong and vigorous took courage by his example, and wrote to tell him the secret of their fitness. Pamphlets dealing with rejuvenating remedies, and even chemical preparations, arrived in quantities. Advertising managers offered him a free trial of their receipts in the hope of being able to placard the walls subsequently with the announcement : "By the use of this remedy Hindenburg has preserved his health."

It was not medicines but work which proved the best tonic for the Marshal. Once more he had duties which compelled him to live by routine. By 10 a.m. he was at his writing-table either studying the contents of his despatch boxes or listening to the reports of his assistants, or drafting replies and correcting with his accustomed accuracy the smallest mistake in the typing. In the afternoon he received representatives of parties, associations, and committees, and in the evening entertained at dinner such visitors as had come from a distance.

The rush of his existence seemed to pull him together, so much so indeed that his entourage was lost in admiration at his increasing energy and the mental discipline which steeled his self-reliance to an ever higher temper. He himself was conscious of the improvement. "Thank God," he once humorously remarked, "I have once more got some work to do. I was getting a bit rusty ; life on retired pay makes a man slack, one mustn't have time to feel the approach of old age."

And now once more the gossips were busy and imaginative folk romanced about secret communications which

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were passing between Hanover and Doorn, the seat of the dethroned Emperor. The sensational press informed its readers of the discovery of a regular system of communication between William II and his Field Marshal, which had been established, so it was alleged, in view of the return of the former monarch. The Crown Prince, it was said, was in the neighbourhood of Hanover, and was prepared to open negotiations. Hindenburg had obtained permission from Doorn to act as Regent.

This and similar rubbish was telegraphed backwards and forwards for a few days, till it disappeared in the limbo of false reports. The inventive faculties of the reporters of the world's press, it must be confessed, were put to a severe strain, for there was nothing sensational for them to announce. The anecdotes in circulation were harmless and what political news there was was straightforward and to the point.

The international news agencies were allowed to submit written inquiries to him, but his answers were too circumstantial and definite to allow of any misunderstanding whatever. What interested the world more than anything was his attitude towards peace and war. He explained his views to the representative of Reuter's agency in the following terms : "Germany, in the opinion of a military expert like myself, is not even in a position to defend herself by force of arms against the smallest of her neighbours ; for even such states as Poland and Czecho-Slovakia have much bigger standing armies than we, and moreover are protected by alliances : so that in any case we should be opposed by vastly superior forces."

It was the language of a military diplomatist who still held to the old popular conceptions with regard to armaments. It was quite true that with the exception of her small professional army Germany no longer possessed any

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reliable forces, and that she had no foreign allies to follow her to war. Hindenburg only took the army and our alliances into consideration, when making this pronouncement, and was therefore dealing with certain definitely ascertainable factors.

The German Higher Command in the World War had overestimated very considerably the efficiency of the individual German and the potentialities of the German economy, an error for which Hindenburg cannot be held directly responsible. It was a fundamental error which, however pardonable from the patriotic point of view, the Marshal had no intention of repeating a second time. This was the cause of his professional pessimism, a pessimism which he has never shaken off throughout the whole of his presidential term of office.

These interviews were made the subject of leading articles in five continents ; every sentence he uttered was weighed in scales that were not always properly adjusted. Moreover the translators were let loose on his pronouncements, and when the latter were repeated back to Hanover, they not only read differently, but their sense had been either watered down or exaggerated. During the war he had said but one thing and that repeatedly : We shall win, we must win. There had been no mistake, no possibility whatever of misinterpretation about that.

And now what sayings were being fathered upon him, how unfairly were his words being distorted ! Pact of security in the west and revision of our frontiers in the east ? He had said nothing of the sort. And what about international agreement ? He was far too well acquainted, he had said, with the horrors of war not to wish for peace. That was what he had said, and before he could stop them, the international news agencies were flashing once more over the wires a perverted version of his convictions. He

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was not afraid of war, he had said, although he was now in favour of peace. At least he was reported as having said so by a foreign newspaper.

Were they only mistakes of translation or transmission ? Politics are a treacherous game, full of deceptions, hypocrisies and deliberate misinterpretations. In war, goodness knows, there had been lying enough, but poisonous mendacity was the necessary accompaniment of the roar of the guns. But now in peace-time ? Would men never behave straightforwardly to one another ?

He was now able for the first time to measure the depths of political dishonesty and to penetrate the disguise which concealed the selfishness of parties, peoples, classes and nations. As a soldier he had had to deal merely with his comrades and the enemy, whereas civilian political life, so it appeared to him, was full of deceit and baseness.

He pondered awhile and cross-questioned his entourage in a manner which betrayed an almost childlike sense of honour. They told him rather cynically that nothing else was to be expected in the political muck-heap. "In any case," he said, pressing his hands hard against the corners of his writing-table, "I won't allow such things to be done on my behalf. I insist upon my political adversaries receiving decent treatment at the hands of my supporters."

Soon after this a newspaper came into his hands, in which one of his followers had been making some rather vile insinuations about Herr Marx. He burst into a fury ; let the writer just dare to show his face before him ! He was too much of a gentleman by nature to adapt himself to such dishonest methods.

Now and then he would be visited by professional politicians of some eminence who with an air of assumed frankness would tell him with a knowing smile of their

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latest manœuvre. On such occasions he could become very unpleasant indeed and give instructions that the fellow was not to be readmitted to the house.

Nevertheless he was outwitted by many a skilful wire-puller ; occasionally it was even necessary to deceive him. We live in a wicked world and the road is not always straight. He would be introduced to this and that visitor who had been a generous contributor to the electoral funds ; the Marshal had to be left in ignorance or he would have angrily refused to be exhibited for payment.

Once he suddenly asked how all the electoral expenses were defrayed. Out of the contributions of the national organisations, he was told. The money, he replied, would be more advantageously spent on charity. Instead of spending so much money on propaganda it would have been better to assist the victims of the war ; either the expensive machinery of canvassing could be dispensed with, or if not he would prefer not to stand. In any event he hoped he would not owe his election to money, which he despised as a man while recognising its importance from the point of view of the frugal housekeeper.

Innocent foolery on the other hand delighted him, as for instance when the grey charger he rode at Tannenberg was solemnly conducted round a small town in East Germany, or when a burly actor appeared at a meeting dressed up to resemble Hindenburg and the audience for a time was taken in.

A week before the decisive day Hanover celebrated its 'Hindenburg Sunday.' About midday an orderly crowd headed by the patriotic societies with their banners and bands paraded the so-called Hindenburg quarter of the town. He looked very imposing in his general's greatcoat with its red facings, as he stood firm and erect on his balcony, his left hand upon the pommel of his sword, his

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right hand at the salute. For two hours he stood there as if carved out of stone, a feat of endurance which many of his juniors would have been unable to perform. Was not this enough to destroy the legend of his physical decrepitude?

But the chief and most tiring items of the day's programme had still to take place. The leaders of the 'Reichsblock' had been invited to take tea with him. In the evening he was to entertain in the town hall six hundred political guests from all parts of Germany as well as the numerous representatives of the foreign press who for some time past had been infesting Hanover.

The reception was initiated with great solemnity. He made a longish speech. In majestic and harmonious periods, the pregnant import of which was emphasised by appropriate gesture, he outlined his ideal of the German future. The representatives of the parties and associations who were promoting his election solemnly pledged their support in turn. He remained standing throughout the whole of their lengthy speeches, mustering the huge semi-circle of guests like a general officer at a conference of his subordinates, thanking each one of the speakers individually, and finally addressed them once more, and concluded the proceedings with a call for cheers for the Fatherland.

Then the social function began and he had to submit to the attentions of the inquisitive and the gossips. Hardly had he terminated a short conversation with one of them, when the latter's acquaintances would rush up and note down what 'he' had said. Foreign journalists came up to him with funny questions and got humorous answers. "What was the greatest day of your life, Field Marshal?" "The first time," he answered, "during my cadetship, when I was allowed to eat as many cakes and as much

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whipped cream as I liked." They were surprised to notice and be told that he only smoked an occasional cigarette, and not as they had supposed a long pipe and big Havana cigars. To one of them who wanted to know how many orders he had he replied: "I am seventy-seven years old and have got seventy-seven orders, but I didn't get one every year." A Frenchman asked him to sign a postcard of greeting to Marshal Foch, but was met with a smiling refusal. "That gentleman," he said, "has long since refused to have anything to say to me."

The text of his speech in the meanwhile had been printed in pamphlet form, and he was assailed with countless requests to sign his name at the end of it. Occasionally his writing-table lay inches deep in papers, and cardboard portraits awaiting his signature. And in the midst of all this office work he was expected to reply without the smallest hesitation to anyone who addressed him. "You are an East Prussian you say? From Insterburg? Give my love to Rennenkampf's old hotel; he'll never go back there."

On another occasion he shouted to his departing guests as they went down the staircase, "Well, gentlemen, I think I've proved to you that I'm still fit for active service."

Marx, too, had been very much to the fore that Sunday. He had spent the whole day making a progress through Central Germany, in the course of which he delivered the same speech seven times in twelve hours.

Three days later the whole country was given the opportunity of listening to Hindenburg's voice on the wireless. He took some persuading before he could be induced to take his place in front of this new-fangled microphone. He had taken some years to get accustomed to the telephone, he said, somewhat ironically, and now he was expected to adapt himself to another of these damnable

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new inventions. They would soon be asking him to get into an aeroplane !

Eventually he agreed to sit down in the scarlet-draped studio. As the hand of the clock pointed to 8, the small control-lamp flickered and he began to speak, beating time as he did so with his closed fist on the desk. His brow grew moist as he warmed to his work. At last he finished ; but the announcer had been so affected by what he had seen and heard that he forgot to switch off, and the listeners could hear the Marshal saying to those present : " Well, thank God, we've done it." Indeed, he had done it, as the following Sunday was to show.

His voice was destined on many subsequent occasions to be carried into the most distant corners of the country : but never, we may be sure, was it listened to with such rapt attention by every section of the nation, farm-hands, slum-dwellers, distant sailors and mountaineers, as on this historic occasion.

This was Hindenburg's first experience with the wireless : since those days he has become an attentive listener, and infinitely prefers to hear the news, whether amusing or serious, through the loud speaker rather than read it in the newspapers.

The electoral contest was drawing to a close. Printers' ink and human lungs had done their worst, but the party colours, which were displayed with increasing prominence as the poll drew near, showed more eloquently than any speeches where the strength of the two sides lay. Hindenburg still led the host which stood by the Imperial colours. The Republic and the new Reich and its symbols still seemed to be identified with the man who stood as the heir of Ebert's democratic opinions.

Hindenburg and Marx, which was it to be ! It was not a question of Spa or Weimar. Spa represented the break-up

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of the old Reich, Weimar the foundation of the new one. Which of the twain was to make the new house inhabitable, and in what style was it to be fitted up ? The two architects who were competing for the contract differed less in their plans and aims than the party prejudices of the moment would have had their followers believe. " Vote for Hindenburg or Marx, but in any case vote ! " was the cry now heard on many sides. Such an utterance, of course, at the eleventh hour was prompted by political faint-heartedness and the desire to avoid responsibility.

Who were in favour of Hindenburg and who of Marx ? There were innumerable voters who up to the last minute had not made up their minds. Germany as represented by its middle-class *élite* had taken to politics with such suddenness and violence, and was so bewildered by slogans, prejudices and the shifting currents of opinion, that it was completely at a loss how to act. It was the non-political voters who were to prove the decisive factors. Shortly before the polling-day a statement was disseminated by the black, red and gold headquarters that Hindenburg would not accept the presidency if elected, and had only stood so as to enable the nationalists to take stock of their strength.

Nobody who knew him believed a word of it : indeed, as time went on it was becoming more and more evident that many even of those who supported him most enthusiastically for the sake of old times did not know the man with whom they were dealing. Popularity born of sentimentality is very unreliable. During the week-end before the ballot boxes in which the will of the people was collected and classified were filled and opened, his prospects were not considered very favourable. His chief political supporters were once more assailed with doubts. Now at last they realised the gravity of their venture, notwithstanding the

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impressive and promising results of the canvass of the last few weeks under his ægis.

Would this nation that had long since become demoralised by the violent transition from the old order to the new still have the courage to make a trial of this man of the past, whose position in the very near future might be of such incalculable importance ? Some members of the Hindenburg caucus even whispered to one another that perhaps it would be as well if the experiment was a failure, that in three months' time nobody would give the matter another thought, so extraordinary was the public's forgetfulness.

Why this feeble acquiescence in defeat, after so much fiery oratory, and when the candidate had proved himself 'fit for active service' ? The Right didn't itself know what it wanted, and therefore would have preferred that nothing should happen, because it was apprehensive of any definite result, and wished to prolong the period of suspense in order to make up its mind. The republicans of Weimar, who now were united in one and the same cause, realised this of course. They had recovered from the consternation caused by the news of Hindenburg's intervention, and were exultantly confident of victory. In Berlin the political turfites were betting on the result. Marx was favourite, and Hindenburg found very few to back him.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE PRESIDENT TAKES THE OATH

THE orchards of the low German plain were a mass of red and white blossom. The ruddy glow shed by the queerly-pitched roofs of homesteads and farm buildings and the brightly-painted beam work and window shutters of the cottages completed the cheerful picture. It looked as if all the toys in the world had been heaped up in the heart of this ancient kingdom of the Guelphs, where a fringe of willows marked the course of the clear but sluggish Oker, into whose waters the Brunswick revolutionaries had thrown their weapons after the collapse of the red commune in 1919.

The gentle chimes of the little church of Gross Schwülper proclaimed the Sabbath morn, the morning of 26th April, 1925, a day as yet unassociated with any historical event of importance. Perhaps, however, it would be remembered by future generations. Who, indeed, had ever heard of the village of Gross Schwülper ? A few miles away it was completely unknown.

The villagers, arrayed in their Sunday best, were astir at an early hour. Long before the church opened the inn was doing a brisk trade. Motor-cars were hurrying to and fro along the uneven asphalt roads, and a squad of green-coated police was seen marching in column down the village street. The villagers had put on their badges and medals, and had gathered expectantly upon the

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village green, where they kept pointing to the long manor-house of grey stone chequered with cross-beams that nestled snugly among the trees.

Thither he had come, impervious to the prevailing excitement, to await the result in calmness and patience. The inhabitants remembered him well : they had often seen him coming down the steps and strolling round the lawns in front of the house : they remembered, too, that wonderful day shortly after the war, it was spring too then, when Hindenburg's son had married the daughter of the squire of Gross Schwilper. The Marshal's lifelong companion had been present then to take part in the joyous ceremony ; but now he had only his children and grandchildren around him, and strangers who were anxious to take him away from them and back to the great world once more.

The spacious house was filled that day with his relatives. It might very well be that he was bidding farewell to unconstrained intercourse with his family should a sufficient number of voters that day require him to do so. The mistress of the house was the widowed Baroness von Mahrenholtz, the mother-in-law of Oskar von Hindenburg, who had recently been given his majority in the Reichswehr. Her other son-in-law, Baron Nolde from the Baltic provinces, was also present, and he who had fought at Tannenberg on the other side in obedience to the unwelcome call of duty as a Russian officer of the reserve was now about to vote as a German citizen at the village polling-booth for the man who had been in command of his foes.

The oldest inhabitants of the village, too, a few of whom still wore the medal of Langensalza, were now going to give a vote of confidence to their one-time enemy of 1866.

While Father Hindenburg was taking his morning walk amid the flower-beds and beneath the sprouting oaks of

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the park, a huge plaster cast of his head, surrounded by a wreath of black, white and red, was being paraded through West Berlin on a truck to which a brewery team had been harnessed, amid the songs and cheers of the Nationalists. Simultaneously in the East End of the capital caricatures were being exhibited aloft, in which he was represented with a bloody moustache and dagger.

Meanwhile the grandchildren and great-nephews were tugging at the tails of the real Hindenburg's shooting-coat and riding on his walking-stick !

At luncheon politics were not discussed, except between neighbours and then only in an undertone. The last electoral convulsions of the press had no attraction for him, and the pile of newspapers in the hall was left unread. To-morrow, if it were the will of Germany, he would have more than enough office work to deal with. He evinced no curiosity as to the result of the first counts, and at 10 o'clock retired to bed, requesting them as he did so not to disturb him when the result was known. To-morrow would be time enough to know whether he was to go to Berlin or not.

The pencils of the calculators feverishly added column after column of figures together as the telephone announcements poured in. Partial results meant very little as yet : for, to begin with, in the big cities the counting was better organised, and also in the majority of cases the distribution of parties was very different from that of the middle-sized and smaller towns. All the earlier counts showed a tremendous preponderance of the Left in the densely populated industrial quarters, whereas the Right, whose supporters were mainly drawn from the more thinly populated country districts, where counting was bound to be slower, drew up steadily at every successive count as the night went on.

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Two hours before midnight Marx was so far ahead that a victory for Hindenburg was scarcely deemed possible. No returns, it was true, had as yet come in from the east, and the Marshal was the hero of his own province. The Rhine had deserted him, for there both Catholics and Social Democrats favoured the old black, white and gold republican, the former on account of his religion, the latter on account of his genuine devotion to Ebert's political ideals. In Saxony, on the other hand, between Leipsic and the frontier mountains whence the Left drew so much of its support, political conditions were entirely reversed. The whole trend of public opinion was towards evangelicism or secularism, and the more extreme among the socialists looked upon Marx as a clerical and distrusted him accordingly. They therefore either abstained from voting or voted for their fellow-Protestant Hindenburg as the lesser of the two evils. The philistines of the lower middle classes, moreover, were sentimentally attached to their old hero, whereas Marx was merely a prominent politician whose name was unpleasantly associated with the bad times they had been through.

Be that as it may, the results from Saxony proved the turning-point in the race. The two competitors were now almost abreast. The faithful henchmen of the Reichsbanner in their elation at the results in Western Germany had already begun to celebrate their triumph outside the offices of the democratic newspapers in Berlin, and were calling for cheers for President Marx. A light rain was falling, and the figures projected by the eerie light of the magic lanterns on to the milky-white screens danced up and down bewilderingly in the darkness.

And now Marx again was leading, sometimes by a little more, sometimes a little less; anyhow, Marx was winning. The Hindenburgites lost confidence and stopped cheering.

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Every now and then a number of them would strike up *Es braust ein Ruf wie Donnerhall*,<sup>1</sup> but somehow or other it didn't go. The Rhineland had shown by its defection that day from the national cause that it no longer held by the old song. Editors left their typewriters and strode impatiently up and down. In two hours' time they would have to give to the world their views as to the result of the election. Was it to be Hindenburg or Marx? It was going to be a very close thing!

At midnight the news came that Bavaria had voted for Hindenburg and East Prussia for its saviour in 1914! The latter was now leading by several hundred thousand votes, and the official electoral bureau stated that his victory seemed probable: an announcement that was received with booing and whistling, and shouts of "Swindle! Swindle!"

At 1 a.m. the official bureau stated that Hindenburg's election was a certainty, although the results from Mecklenburg had yet to be received. The Marxians gradually slunk away, while the Nationalists of the old school, who had been roused to wild enthusiasm by the pleasant nature of their surprise, vented the popular feeling undeterred by rain or cold by singing "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles," a song which in itself seemed to be a first act of conciliation, for it was Ebert who had raised it to the dignity of the National Anthem, and as such it would have been sung had Marx been successful.

The result was announced at Gross Schwülper by wireless. While the peasants were toasting his success at the inn and the family were silently congratulating one another, the victor of the plebiscite was sleeping the deep dreamless sleep of the just. Nobody dared to awake him. The congratulations had got to be faced, and besides his task of governing would begin soon enough.

<sup>1</sup> The first line of *Die Wacht am Rhein*.

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The victory was a very narrow one. According to the final count 14,639,395 votes were cast for Hindenburg, and 13,753,642 for Marx. His majority, therefore, was less than a million, in fact not even 900,000. The country east of the Elbe had turned the scales in his favour. In the towns indeed Marx had had the best of it, but the provinces that had been so long associated with the history of the Beneckendorff-Hindenburg family had for once defeated the industrial west. It was the first time for many years that the industrial army and its democratic middle-class allies had been beaten by the nationalism of the countryside. The results, however, which the Right had anticipated from the election failed to materialise, and therefore the victory of the black, white and red extremists was merely arithmetical, and even so more apparent than real.

The newspapers of the Left took some time to recover from this staggering blow. They began by lamenting the victory as one of 'political immaturity.' "Champagne-bottles can be heard popping as they did after the death of Rathenau," was one of the venomous expectorations that still occasionally found their way into their columns.

The successful candidate himself was greeted by his defeated opponents with every mark of loyal esteem. "Now that the majority of the nation," wrote one of them, "has decided in his favour it is the duty of the republicans to treat the new constitutionally-elected Head of the State with the respect that is due to him; a task which will be the easier of accomplishment if he is willing to give the young state the benefit of his well-proven and characteristic qualities." Marx's election, on the other hand, would undoubtedly have been hailed by the press of the Right with wild abuse.

Wilhelm Marx, the defeated candidate, who had been beaten at the post, was one of the first to telegraph to

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President von Hindenburg to assure him of his loyal co-operation. And when subsequently Hindenburg was called upon to appoint his first Chancellor his choice fell not once but twice upon Marx. The opposing forces gradually dissolved and amalgamated with one another, and only crystallised into permanent opposition on the extreme flanks.

The Monday dawned fair at Gross Schwulper. The sun was streaming into the hall as he received the congratulations of his relations and helpers upon the good news which his son had just brought him. The Marshal President did his best to moderate their exuberance. "Now I shall have plenty to do," he remarked half-seriously half-smilingly to one of them. To another he observed pensively that no doubt he would have a lot to learn, but that one was never too old for that, and that it was better to try to learn thoroughly what was essential than to know everything by halves. Constitutional text-books were henceforth to be his constant companions and take the place of the Prussian army regulations and the maps of Russia, Poland and Flanders.

He then proceeded to examine the electoral returns. The result of the polling in East Prussia gave him especial satisfaction. The opposition of the majority of the working classes on the other hand, however natural under the circumstances, pained him considerably, for he had far greater sympathy at heart with the simple artisan than with the trading and industrial bourgeoisie. "May God grant," he said with a sigh, "that these party differences soon cease." The answer is not recorded. His interlocutor was probably too sceptical as to the fulfilment of his prayer to know what to say. Controversy is perpetual but harmony is evanescent. The 'spirit of the 1st of August, 1914,' which has been christened the Hindenburg spirit, had

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unfortunately been nothing more than a brief episode at the beginning of the long war of defence.

The new chief then imparted to his collaborators his first resolve. "I will neither be dictated to by any party or group nor will I specially favour anyone merely on account of his services during the election. I am going to hold out the hand of friendship to my late opponents as I would to my most trusted friends."

At midday the house was besieged once more by the reporters, those self-invited guests from afar who had been set the impossible task of obtaining his views or photographs of his home life. One after another they climbed the walls and vaulted down into the courtyard, where they ensconced themselves behind the trees. Hindenburg had been looking out of the window and was vastly amused by their proceedings, and, entering into the spirit of the game, begged them to come forward and satisfy themselves that he was exactly the same as he had been two days previously. They had hardly disappeared when the village musicians, in their shabby frock-coats and with their tall hats tilted back on their heads, marched in to play in his honour the beloved songs of ex-servicemen's societies.

Some time was to elapse before he assumed his functions. The socialists, by way of a final demonstration, petitioned against the validity of the election. A week and more elapsed before that was settled. Moreover preparations for his removal and the assumption of office had to be made, and they took some time. For the moment, however, his chief difficulty was to cope with the flood of congratulatory messages which poured in upon him. Princes, generals, statesmen of the former quadruple alliance and of neutral countries congratulated him : cables and wireless messages arrived from America ; telegrams were received from economic leaders and savants, brother officers and com-

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manders on the German frontiers and a hundred thousand others of less importance ; but not a word reached him from Czecho-Slovakia. The Czech Government had ordered the post not to accept congratulatory messages to Hindenburg.

The comments of the foreign press, save only that of France, were eminently sensible in character. A noteworthy exception was the *New York Evening Post*, an extract from which deserves reproduction. "The German people," it wrote, "cannot divest itself of its responsibility for Hindenburg's triumph or the effect upon Germany and the world at large. . . . In the eyes of the world this German election marks a definite retrogression and proves that the spirit of Germany is unchanged. The tocsin is sounding throughout France and Central Europe."

The general opinion was very well expressed by the *New Statesman*. "Hindenburg," it wrote, "is a general but not a militarist, a national hero, but not a nationalist. He is not a conspirator and will not lend himself to a *coup d'état*. It is not a bad thing that he should have been elected President of the German Republic."

In Germany in the meantime he was being besieged by a host of petitioners. To judge by the number of begging letters that kept arriving one can only suppose that he was assumed to be a milliardaire. Everyone whose affairs had gone wrong wrote either to ask him for money or to beg him to obtain for them a lucrative appointment without delay. Not all of his correspondents, alas ! were so simple-minded ; some of them were merely impudent. The record in this respect was held by one individual, who wrote to Hindenburg enclosing a five-mark note with a request for several of his signed photographs !

The departure of her old and faithful burgess was celebrated by Hanover by a torchlight procession, the first of

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a series of demonstrations by which Germany celebrated the assumption of office of the new guardian of the Reich. Once more on that mild May evening did the huge column of students, patriotic associations, artisan guilds, schools, and athletic societies, interspersed with symbolical groups representing periods of our past history, march past the President who, now dressed in black, saluted them from the balcony where three weeks previously he had stood in the uniform of a Field Marshal.

Two days later he started on his historic progress, which was to culminate in his third entry into the capital. In the heyday of monarchy he had marched beneath the Brandenburger Tor as a young subaltern fresh from the field of Königgrätz ; then after the war of 1870-71, as regimental adjutant into the Imperial capital of a united Empire. And now in his old age, after the lapse of more than half a century and the failure to obtain the supreme honours of victory in the final struggle, it was no longer a monarch but he who was to be the central figure of a solemn reception.

Most of the senior officials of the Wilhelmstrasse who thenceforth were to assist the new President in his labours had already waited upon him at Hanover, chief among them the Chancellor, Dr. Luther, who quickly gained the esteem of Hindenburg. Luther is one of those robust natures who by reason of the unconventionality of his methods and the broad humanity of his treatment possesses the gift of moulding the most refractory material and of presenting even the most repellent of problems in an attractive form. Subsequently, it is true, the personal relations between the President and the Chancellor altered for the worse owing to Luther's driving and untiring energy and his trick of vigorously bombarding the old gentleman with arguments based upon constitutional law instead of allowing the latter time for reflection.

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Dr. Meissner too, the principal Presidential private secretary, who had been Ebert's confidential adviser, had presented himself at the Seelhorststrasse. At first it was generally thought that Hindenburg would appoint one of his own family circle as head of his secretariat, as was customary with most of the holders of high office in the State. The newly-elected President, however, was anxious not to break with the traditions so recently established by Ebert with regard to the presidential office. It was Meissner too who had built up the ceremonial of the German Republic, for Ebert, as was natural in view of his previous history, had had very little experience in matters of ceremonial and showed very little inclination to concern himself with formalities.

Even a republic, however, cannot do without a certain amount of etiquette, which is indispensable moreover in dealing with foreign representatives. To strike a happy mean between courtly magnificence and plain business-like intercourse, without any sacrifice of dignity or disregard of the exigencies of the present day, demands not only tact but the ability to discriminate between essentials and non-essentials. Meissner was familiar with all these difficult problems and also thoroughly conversant with the many border-line cases which call for a compromise between traditional usage and modern simplicity.

Germany's position in international politics had been so shaken by the disastrous results of the war that even the ceremonial cupola of sovereignty showed traces of the late convulsion. The lack of a firmly-established social order moreover in a country which had just emerged from the worst of political turmoils rendered the establishment of fixed conventions with regard to the unwritten laws of intercourse doubly difficult. Meissner had overcome these obstacles and the confusion incidental to these circum-

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stances with skill and tenacity, a result which was due, not only to his diplomatic charm, but to his reliability as an administrator and a perspicacity which amounted almost to second sight.

Hindenburg possessed too much knowledge of mankind not to realise at once the indispensability of this experienced, unprejudiced and politically-independent official. Fundamentally as the two men differed, for Hindenburg was guided by his emotions and Meissner by his intelligence, they both soon learned to work together. Differences of opinion have occasionally arisen between them and their relations have at times been temporarily strained, but the two men have generally managed to make up their quarrels long before rumours of serious dissensions got abroad.

Throughout the whole of his long career Hindenburg has generally worked best with men whose whole nature is diametrically opposite to his own. Meissner has never taken advantage of this fundamental difference as Ludendorff did in his latter and more evil days, and has consequently acquired a position of enormous influence as the result of his collaboration with Hindenburg.

It is characteristic of men who possess genuine influence and the faculty of using it to the general advantage that they usually prefer to ensure the success of the performance as a whole rather than monopolise the attention of the public by their acting ; and Meissner has found that he can render himself more useful by playing the decisive part allotted to him than by giving the performers their cues from the wings. It is a very wise attitude on the part of one who is a power behind the throne, and the only one that could be permanently tolerated by a man of character like the President.

The principal part in politics is played after all by the Chancellor, but the *raison d'être* of the chief subordinate of

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the President, enjoying as he does the confidence of his master, is to prepare the latter for the decisions which are pending, and supply the head of the State with whatever information he may require. As a matter of fact, Meissner has succeeded so well in keeping intriguers at a distance that the President has never allowed himself to be led astray by the insinuations of irresponsible advisers, however strongly he may occasionally have been tempted to do so.

It was at noon, then, of the 10th of May that the soldier who had been elected to lead the nation in place of Ebert set out on that memorable journey to where Luther and Meissner were awaiting him. They had both owed their appointment to Ebert, and had accompanied him to his last resting-place. Their presence therefore at Hindenburg's reception seemed to symbolise the connection between the present Head of the State and his predecessor.

As yet, however, Hindenburg had not said goodbye to the town he loved so dearly, beneath whose soil his life-long companion was buried. Work was going on at Hanover Station with its usual noisy rhythm. But there was a buzz of excitement among the masses which lined the approach to the platform where the guard of honour of police was drawn up at attention. As the President emerged from the subway he was greeted with cries of '*Au revoir*' by the dense throng. "No," shouted one of the noisier enthusiasts in a voice that rose above the din, "*not au revoir*. Seven years hence Hindenburg will be re-elected President."

Noske, the Governor of the Province, had come to bid him an official farewell, and was awaiting him at the door of his saloon. A socialist and a republican from his youth upwards, he had had dealings with the Marshal both as friend and foe, for he had been one of his most hostile critics during the war and had helped him to suppress the

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rebellion in 1919, when, in spite of never having served even as a recruit, he was appointed successively military governor, commander-in-chief and war minister, in which capacity he had created our voluntary service army. In a sense he was a brother officer of Hindenburg, for he had commanded the forces which suppressed the revolution in the interior, a rôle which had earned him the nickname of 'the butcher' from the extremists of the Left, who loathed him even more than the Marshal of Spa.

Noske, who from the point of view of age was almost a young man in comparison with Hindenburg, seemed more weather-beaten and tired than the old man who now as Head of the State was to watch over the interests of the Republic, which had been defended at the cost of so much bloodshed by the ex-timber man. Gustav Noske, it is true, was no longer the 'surly Gustav' of 1918 ; he had acquired the proper official appearance and demeanour : nevertheless, compared with the imperturbable Hindenburg, he seemed like a man of the past, a relic of the by now almost legendary period of the revolution.

For, curiously enough, it was just about this time, during the years 1924 and 1925, that the nation finally banished from its memory the chaotic discussions and the street fighting which had marked this transitional period, and realised the fact that there had been a World War. Even in 1923, when the forces of subversion had raised their heads for the last time, Bolshevism and White Guardism had still been conceptions with a very definite meaning.

Now, however, confidence had been restored, and men's minds reverted not unwillingly to the 'great era.' Under the ægis of Hindenburg, the hero of a thousand fights, the sham peace of 1919 was to be succeeded by an era of genuine reconciliation, both at home and abroad. The gigantic struggle and the dramatic sacrifices it had in-

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volved were less horrible to contemplate in the light of present knowledge and security, which seemed to render the burden of recollection less intolerable.

The echoes of the first official cheers for the new President had hardly died away when the express train to which his saloon had been attached began to move from the platform. As the wheels rattled over the points the Marshal stood at the window of his gaily-decorated apartment, trying to catch the last strains of the *Deutschland* song, "if she always holds fraternally together in defence or defiance." Always? Fraternally? Vows uttered by the multitude on such festive occasions must not be taken too literally.

That day, at any rate, they were really meant by those who with sublime simplicity sought to express their feelings during his long journey to Berlin. Wherever the train stopped he was compelled to show himself at the window; indeed, he himself gave orders for the barriers to be removed. Everyone was treated as a personal friend, and allowed to approach this patriarchal and genuine old democrat. He let them all shake hands with him, a permission of which, from his point of view, they took undue advantage, for they were still trying to seize hold of his hand long after the train had started.

Cheeky youngsters waved paper flags among the golden-green foliage, school choirs stood drawn up on every platform to greet him. As he approached his journey's end the pile of bouquets in the saloon grew higher and higher. The faces of travellers and onlookers reflected the prevailing merry mood, and no one gave a thought to the prosaic round of public duties by which the public rejoicings must necessarily be followed.

At Spandau, the stronghold of Brandenburg, the next stopping-place, the popular rejoicings were no less sincere,

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but starched officialdom was already to the fore. Messengers had been sent to meet the train with the exact programme of the ceremonies at Berlin. Aeroplanes roared overhead, bearing beneath their wings the distinguishing marks of German nationality.

And now, instead of running past the little suburban station of Heerstrasse, the train suddenly stopped. The door was opened and from among the group of important personages who stood solemnly awaiting him, there stepped forth the graceful ten-year old daughter of the Chancellor, who presented him with a bouquet and recited a few lines of greetings on behalf of the younger generation which had made this age so truly its own.

“We are the future, we are the seed.

We wish to grow up strong and straight.

Be to us a good gardener,

May God be with you, for He can help you.”

Hindenburg was deeply moved by her words, and bending down he kissed the little lady.

But the formal presentations had now begun, and with them rigid officialdom resumed its rights. In dead silence the party passed down the laurel-bestrewed staircase into the station yard. As Hindenburg entered his car his presidential flag was hoisted on the radiator. Fifty motorcyclists, who had been waiting for hours drawn up beside their machines to greet him, simultaneously seized their levers and started their engines. Fifty machines beating with drumlike precision took up their position in wedge-shaped formation at the head and in the rear of the procession ; and, thus escorted, the long line of cars set off on its journey through Charlottenburg, the Tiergarten and the Brandenburger Tor. A hundred thousand spectators lined the gaily decorated streets. The private houses were hung with black, white and red, whereas the repub-

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licans for the most part had omitted to decorate. Was it an echo of the elections ? The avowed partisans of the new order created at Weimar were still rather at sea, and not quite certain as to whether they ought to greet the Marshal with the symbol of the youthful democratic state. And yet the new President had mounted the black, red and gold tricolour on his car.

There was something very paradoxical about the decoration of the streets that day, a paradox which the adherents of the black, red and white who had come to pay him honour were as yet unable to realise. This guard of honour, this motley army of young and old, veterans in the insignia of their societies, simple working men, mothers and lads, gentry and proletariat, not only felt the ties by which they were united, but believed themselves to be the whole people. Anyone who stood aside seemed to have no part in the nation. The crowd, psychologically speaking, was not swayed by mere emotionalism ; its attitude, however, was based upon an historical delusion.

Round upon round of cheers greeted the procession on its way through the gaily decorated streets. Colours were lowered, officers saluted. His escort of aeroplanes was compelled to advance in wide circles in order to keep pace with the slower-moving earth-bound cars below. As the procession approached the Reichstag a squadron of mounted police wheeled towards them, and took its place at the head of the column. A brilliant reminder of former days, these troopers in their brilliant harness, and beside and above them the roaring machines, the modern representatives of steel-clad knighthood—a contrast in externals which was no less apparent than that between the flowing beards and the traditional costumes of the representatives of the guilds and the hatless, open-necked and short-coated crowd around them.

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And now the presidential car rolled into the garden of the Chancellor's palace that had been the scene of so many vicissitudes of German history since the days of Bismarck. The Marshal's soldier-like countenance for an instant changed colour as he turned round paternally to acknowledge the ovations. The last time he had passed this accessible and yet so paralysing threshold had been in October 1918, a month before the supreme crisis, when Max von Baden's tottering government had tried to avert the fall of the Empire by bringing political pressure to bear upon G.H.Q. It had been late at night when the door had closed upon himself and Ludendorff, who was already in disgrace and was to be dismissed ignominiously on the following day.

But now, on this evening of May, the rhododendron bushes were already budding, and upstairs through the bow windows of the Congress Hall, which had witnessed the apogee of Germany's European greatness, he could see the chandeliers which had been lighted for the first republican banquet at which Hindenburg was to be entertained by the Chancellor; for in order to ensure him a quiet night he was to be the latter's guest till the following morning, when he would enter upon the occupation of his official residence.

The 11th May, 1925, dawned fair. It was, indeed, Hindenburg's weather as the early risers joyfully shouted to one another as, their ordinary avocations laid aside, they hurried to the centre of the town: it used to be called 'Emperor's weather.' The streets around the Government offices, save for the Platz der Republik, were all too narrow for popular demonstrations. That open space, which is intersected by avenues and groups of statuary and dominated by the pompous façade of the Reichstag, was still called the Königsplatz as in the days of Lieutenant von Hindenburg: a few minutes after the accession to

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office of the new President it was to be officially renamed the Platz der Republik in compliance with a vow that had been made when Ebert's coffin had halted in front of the Reichstag steps to bid farewell to the citizens of the new Democratic State.

The Government offices had hoisted the official red, black and gold ensign with its severely plain eagle, which the adversaries of the German Republic contemptuously called the 'dying vulture' or the Reich's parrot, whereas the War Office flew the black, white and red flag with the Iron Cross in the centre. The big hotels, clubs and banks either ignored the Reich and only displayed the black and white Prussian colours, or else flew both the old and the new flag of the Reich alongside of one another, as if to proclaim the fact that adherents of both parties were sleeping, drinking, paying in or borrowing beneath their roof, and that they wished to remain impartial. The flagstaff on the presidential palace stood out bare and unadorned amid the gaily decorated roofs of the Wilhelmstrasse.

The streets between the Chancellor's palace and the Reichstag had been closed to the public, and their asphalt surface was hidden beneath a layer of freshly-strewn gravel, which crunched beneath the feet of the officers' chargers as they rode down the route past the pylons of dark pinewood by the classical gateway, the poles and streamers, the battalions of Reichswehr which lined the open spaces, and the gas lamps glimmering feebly in the morning light.

All at once motor-horns were heard followed by the sound of cheering which gradually drew nearer, and sharp words of command, and then Hindenburg's car could be seen slowly approaching with the Chancellor beside and to the left of him. He was on his way to take the Oath in the presence of the representatives of the people as prescribed

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by the Constitution. Together they climbed up Wallot's dimly-lit staircase to the chamber, which was usually the scene of the inefficient labours of our Parliamentarians. Outside in the light of day bands, choirs, uniforms, flower-girls, flag-wavers and soldiers at the 'present' jostled one another with almost operatic promiscuity, while inside in the passages and beneath the glass roof of the chamber there reigned an atmosphere of subdued and mystical calm. Every seat was occupied and yet withal a complete absence of pushing or conversation.

The simplicity with which the scene was laid for the performance of this act of State enhanced the general effect. A fringe of white flowers round the rostra, a covering of black, red and gold for the desk which had been specially widened for the occasion, the presidential flag which stood out huge and square against the brown background, and that was all. Representatives of every country in the world had assembled in the chamber. First and foremost the papal nuncio Pacelli, the doyen of the diplomatic corps, whose clear-cut haughty classical features were admirably set off by his violet robes. Beside him sat the British ambassador Lord d'Abernon, a white-bearded giant who had been a friend of the Wilhelmstrasse in those bygone days when the Entente Powers made their first advance towards Germany. The French Ambassador, a fair-haired, disillusioned gentleman, surveyed the assembly with a mysterious smile as if to say, what curious folk these Germans are!

The other tribunes were occupied by members of the old Prussian nobility. Right in front and leaning on the ledge sat his young daughter-in-law in a blue dress, next her Hindenburg's aged sister from Potsdam, tall and broad-shouldered like the majority of her family, and behind her many blue-blooded representatives of the former Court of

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Potsdam, the Faubourg St. Germain in fact, paying its respect to a form of government which it could not but consider illegitimate. But they had all been blood relations of the Beneckendorffs for centuries, and now that one of their own set had become '*le roi bourgeois*,' so to speak, they were going to Court again, and, so far as social relations were concerned, were willing to ignore its Jacobin origin.

Below them on the extreme left the deputies were wearing what appeared to be red patches on their coats. They were the left-wing socialists, who had inserted blood-red carnations into their buttonholes, an old practice of the extremists, by means of which they had been able to flaunt their convictions with impunity in the days of monarchy. Herr Löbe, the Speaker of the most honourable house, had pinned in the facing of his frock-coat the black, red and gold badge of the Reichsbanner as a sort of talisman in order to avert any danger to the Republic.

The Ministers had all taken their places on the ministerial bench. Stresemann, whose political career was one long conflict between the old order and the new, was looking uneasily about him : he probably more than anyone else of those present appreciated the significance of the historical revulsion that the whirligig of time had brought about. The grey round-headed Chancellor, deliberation and propriety personified, was the last to arrive.

The curtains were pulled wide asunder for the President, and the whole assembly rose in silence as he entered. Even the communists were so taken aback that for a few moments their insolent tongues refused to function. When they recovered themselves it was too late, and no one listened to them. The first spontaneous cheer which greeted the hero of the moment was in no sense of the word a political demonstration, but was given to relieve the

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pent-up feelings of the audience and formed no part of the programme. For one short minute there was neither a Right, a Centre nor a Left. It was only as the speeches proceeded that the various groups were reminded of the differences which divided them.

Hindenburg, looking very white and patriarchal, at first stared stonily in front of him, and then as he inclined his head gently to greet the assembly his features gradually relaxed. Attended by his son, who was wearing the uniform of a General Staff Officer and his war decorations, he took his stand beside Löbe at the presidential desk. The latter made as though he was chiefly concerned about ceremonial detail and the temperature, as if to indicate that there was another whom he would have preferred to welcome there. "Field Marshal," he began, leaving out the 'Your Excellency,' a form of address that Hindenburg always disliked. Löbe then handed him the official Bible, and the President, speaking with a loud deep bass voice, which reverberated with a peculiar resonance through the chamber, took the following Oath : "I swear by God the Almighty and the All-knowing that I will devote my powers to the welfare of the German people, increase its benefits, avert danger from it, observe the Constitution and the laws of the Reich, conscientiously fulfil my duties and do justice toward everyone. So help me God."

It was finished : he had taken the Oath and confirmed it by an appeal to the Almighty. A pause ensued, during which the audience endeavoured to take in the inward meaning of this ceremony the significance of which was not yet apparent to the majority of those present. Löbe was the first to break the spell. Speaking more emotionally than before, he addressed the Marshal of the Hohenzollerns by the official title of President of the Reich that had belonged to Ebert. The sovereignty, he said, had

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reverted to the nation and had now been transferred to the chosen head of the State. He finished by calling for cheers for the nation, the Fatherland and its leaders.

Hindenburg rose to return thanks. He was speaking *ex cathedra*, and therefore, contrary to his usual custom, had to adhere religiously to the wording of his manuscript, for he was not in the habit of constructing elaborate diplomatic periods. Although the language was not just as he usually employed, his natural sincerity lent such force to his words that they carried conviction to the hearts of his hearers. He promised that he would not serve one party more than another, a declaration which sounded unpleasantly in the ears of one party and was received with incredulity by those who at the moment already felt themselves unable to withstand the charm of his forcible personality.

The President raised his hand as a sign of farewell, bowed once more to those who like himself were the elected of the nation, but had not elected him, as was the practice in France. He owed them nothing, in fact was almost independent of them and could even declare their mandates forfeited if they failed in their duties towards the public.

The party proceeded through the lobbies and down the stairs to the terrace where the military ceremony was to take place. Their way lay past the marble statue of the old Emperor. A look of melancholy passed over his face as he looked at the kindly features of the venerable old monarch over whose coffin Major von Hindenburg had mounted guard and for whom as a subaltern he had shed his blood at Königgrätz.

But through the wide-open portals came the sound of regimental bands, kettledrums and trumpets. The Commander-in-Chief advanced down the steps bareheaded. Once more he was in Supreme Command, nay was the

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War Lord himself, but only of a hundred thousand men instead of the ten million who had once obeyed his orders. And even he was not wearing uniform and the military monarchy had been succeeded by a bourgeois republic.

The band played, the troops presented arms, and General von Seeckt came forward to report himself. Behind the motionless ranks of soldiers tossed an immense sea of heads, voices, and waving hands, the popular *levée en masse*. A mighty cheer went up from the banks of the Spree to the Brandenburger Tor. The President bowed his acknowledgments to the crowd and then slowly inspected the rigidly dressed guard of honour.

As he entered the presidential car for the first time after his inauguration, his cavalry escort formed up round him. The sun had been burning hot and the streets dusty, but in spite of these drawbacks, it had been a review far more imposing than any that had ever been witnessed at the Imperial manœuvres.

The façade of the palace was hung with garlands and the courtyard was bedecked with flowers. Officers galloped up ; orders rang out. The Reichswehr guard hurried down the steps and fell in. Just beneath the flagstaff above the baroque roof of the house a head could be seen peering from a dormer window. Suddenly its owner pulled the ropes and the standard rose to the masthead. The lancers wheeled inwards and Hindenburg halted outside the inner gates. Once more—for the last time upon this memorable day—cheers of exultation broke out, cheer upon cheer as though they would never stop, and the Deutschland song was sung again and again before Hindenburg finally turned his back upon the enthusiastic crowd.

In the hall he was awaited by Dr. Simon, the President of the Supreme Court, who had held office as Acting President since Ebert's death and had likewise been sworn

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in a few weeks previously. This faithful deputy, his labours accomplished, now welcomed the nation's elect.

The assembled dignitaries of the Reich then sat down to lunch, a lunch that was followed by more speeches, the tone of which gradually descended from the previously exalted level—the strain had been too great to be unduly prolonged.

In his concluding remarks, which were quite extemporaneous, Hindenburg made one final reference to the deep significance of the day. “The views acquired in that great school of duty which is the German army, will help me to do my work in peace-time, for they can be summed up in the saying that duty comes before rights.”

Duty before rights! He had actually said so and the news spread like wildfire. Next morning it was in the papers. What did he mean by it, people asked. The newspapers were filled with serious forebodings on the one hand, and the too eager self-congratulations of the advocates of authority on the other.

Duty before rights had been the inspiring force of Antigone as well as the driving power of the politician Cleon.

Duty—whatever else it might mean—signified obedience to the dictates of conscience, and the latter was the basis of responsible behaviour. Rights on the other hand were merely an institution. Hindenburg's Oath was an acknowledgment that duty came first. Rights were so fragile that it was only by a real sense of duty that they could be preserved. And it was because this guardian of the Constitution possessed such a sense of duty that he gave an inward significance to what had been a mere formula, and became not merely the chief administrator of the country, but also its moral example.

## CHAPTER XII

### FIRST MAGISTRATE OF THE REPUBLIC

ONCE upon a time a general had built himself a stately house at Berlin by order of Frederick William I, the most economical of all the kings of Prussia. The latter, although no friend of the muses, had a hearty respect for architects. Stately gabled houses for his citizens and noble country houses for his peers, seemed to him a very justifiable extravagance. He distributed materials and exemptions from taxation with a free hand to any of his subjects who were willing to build. The country seats of the nobility and other less important buildings of this period were constructed in accordance with the laws of good taste, a piece of good fortune which was due rather to lucky chance than the merits of the owners or of their exalted protector. It was becoming the fashion about this time among the greater nobility of Prussia to build their residences on the woody outskirts of the capital. The Wilhelmstrasse, the White-hall of Prussia and of the Reich, owes its origin to the palaces which then grew up alongside of one another. The public was naturally very proud of these creations, in spite of their lack of originality. It was hoped that these palatial buildings in the midst of a poverty-stricken capital would be regarded as a sign of the increasing prosperity of the State.

In the Prussia of those bygone days, reasons of State were a more convincing argument than the wishes of the

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owner. These noble lords did not build from a sheer love of architecture, but from a sense of public duty. They preferred infinitely to sit with their boorish sovereign and drink beer in the tobacco-laden atmosphere of some wretched boosehole, where they could spill their liquor freely and waggle their pot bellies in time with the rickety benches.

The baroque residences of the grandees, Franco-Italian in style and acting as they did as an encouragement to refinement, seemed to have been constructed for some ulterior object. They stood there like so many splendid theatres awaiting the historical events of which they were to be the scene. One day they would be inhabited by a Bismarck or a Hindenburg. No doubt bearers of these names had seen them growing up, but long years were to go by before the right Bismarck and then the right Hindenburg came along.

No. 73 Wilhelmstrasse has been the official abode of the German Republic ever since it came into legal existence. It was Lieutenant-General and *Landjägermeister* von Schwerin, one of Frederick William I's most faithful companions, who staked out this magnificent building plot for the greater glory of Prussia. Militarism presided at its birth. The trappings of war are visible everywhere; halberds and ensign spikes formed the chief ornamentation of the railings, and ferocious-looking lions crown the gate posts. The central portion, with its crowded ornamental design in stucco, is preceded by two wings of plainer style designed on the graceful lines of a country house. The edifice, an organic whole, like all good buildings, is more roomy inside than would be suspected at first sight. Where the aim of the architect is to convey an impression of compactness, proportions seem smaller than they really are. The court of honour is dignified and magnificent, the garden front,

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on the other hand, capricious grace personified ; the avenues of trees which intersect the lawns seem to have grown up at will. It is but a step through the hall and the garden vestibule from the street to the heart of the country.

That hard-bitten old soldier, Schwerin, was succeeded in the ownership of all this splendour by a genuine lover of the arts, who hired a pupil of Paisne called Rode to conjure merry genii on to the ceilings and walls, which even to-day seem to transport the onlooker into another age. When Prussia collapsed beneath the lash of Napoleon, this proud nobleman's residence passed into the hands of an enterprising bourgeois, who purchased it for a mere song. The new owner, a certain Reimer, an 'enlightened bookseller' by trade, was more of a business man than a *littérateur*, and accordingly proceeded to remove the magnificent copper roof, which he sold piecemeal in order to recover his purchase money.

After many vicissitudes the house once more passed into the hands of the aristocracy and subsequently of royalty, when it was merged into the crown estates. Count Schleinitz, the Master of the Household of the old Emperor, took up his quarters in this palace, which under the influence of his artistic wife became the cultural centre of Berlin and, indeed, of Germany. The grand piano in the banqueting hall on the first floor responded to the magic touch of Franz Liszt, Cosima and Richard Wagner, while epoch-making celebrities such as Helmholtz and Moltke listened to their masterly performances.

Under the 'young master' the historic site was treated less respectfully. While Eulenburg, the Master of the Household, was in residence, the house was renovated inside in the startling and rather over-elaborate style which the Wilhelminian era affected. This profusion of decoration was only done away with when the knightly palace,

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which had already once belonged to a bourgeois, became the headquarters of the Republic and received a Social Democrat and a man of the people within its walls. On the upper floor, where the inmates had once stalked about in their powdered wigs, the body of Friedrich Ebert had lain in state beneath the uncrowned Eagle, mourned by the graceful genii of the classical and romantic period from behind the hangings of black.

And now at last this house, which had been built by one Prussian general, was occupied by another, who was himself the visible emblem of Germany's sovereignty, and therefore unlike his predecessor had no king to lord it over him.

In the old days the lords from their palaces looked down with scorn upon the dwellings of the governed, no matter how well the latter might think of themselves.

The presidential palace, however, stands in a line with a number of other official and private residences in that quarter of the town. The dignity of the modern state luckily does not suffer from the fact that a baker named Müller sells his rolls at, shall we say, 20 Wilhelmstrasse. The old unbridgeable gap between the powers that be and the humble subject no longer exists, and Master-baker Müller, if the people so decree, may very possibly one day move into No. 73.

A few years before Hindenburg's assumption of office under the Republic, the son of an honourable artisan had been debarred from getting a commission even in a Prussian line regiment. Of course, under the old régime no formal sentence of exclusion was pronounced against the low-born ; the fact remains, however, that no one of humble origin had the smallest chance of becoming a member of the governing class.

Variety was essential in the interests of genuine demo-

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cracy, and the succession therefore of Hindenburg to Ebert initiated a tradition, although the previous substitution of the proletarian party leader for the Imperial Field Marshal had implied a turning point in our destinies.

The office of the presidency of the Reich is one of such dignity that it confers upon its holder equality with the greatest of kings and emperors. With the fall, of course, of the Central Empires and of the Empire of Russia, emperors have become a thing of the past in Europe, where the majority of the heads of states are presidents. Even to-day, however, it is much more profitable to govern by the Grace of God than by the will of the people. The civil list of the German President looks very small when judged by a monarchical standard. Not only is a bank director paid a much larger salary, but the pension of the widow of the head of the State is barely sufficient to enable her to live comfortably in a four-roomed flat.

The entertaining in the presidential palace is therefore on a very modest scale, in fact almost middle-class in its simplicity. Courtly magnificence is entirely absent, and the banquets are far less luxurious than an ordinary dinner-party at a villa in the Grünwald. The president, it is true, is entitled by law to be provided with a complete outfit of furniture. Most of us, however, prefer to live amid our accustomed surroundings, or at any rate not to be parted from favourite pieces of furniture, especially if they have peculiar associations for us. As a matter of fact, when Hindenburg came to Berlin he left behind him most of the valuable tokens of the national respect which had accumulated in his house. The memento of his long career which he values most is the motto of his father, '*ora et labora*', which stands in a frame on his writing table.

The political secretariat is in the wings, where his secretary and the family of his son and aide-de-camp are

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also housed. The other officials only attend during office hours. This administrative secretariat is called 'the presidential bureau,' a simple designation for which the severely practical Ebert was responsible.

When Hindenburg took over this 'bureau' some subserviently-minded folk would fain have had him transform it into a 'cabinet.' The new chief, however, who resembled his predecessor Ebert in his dislike of unnecessary ostentation, declared that the name was to remain unchanged. The rumours, moreover, that President von Hindenburg was desirous of creating a Lord Chamberlain's department were rightly and categorically denied as 'ridiculous inventions.'

The number of rumours that were spread abroad, and even recorded in black and white during the first few weeks after his accession to office, can only be described as fabulous. Questions of etiquette and the never-failing appeal of human vanity were at the bottom of most of them. It was said, for instance, that Hindenburg was anxious to create a 'badge of merit,' in other words to found a substitute for the decorations which had been abolished by the Constitution and that he was thinking of introducing specially embroidered uniforms for the higher officials. He was said to be dissatisfied with his official residence, and intended to remove to the Castle at Potsdam or to Bellevue, where he would be separated by the Tiergarten from the *profanum vulgus* of the capital, and that he was intending to make Rheinsberg, too, the scene of the youth of Frederick the Great, his summer residence.

It was really most illogical that the individuals who were most opposed to the republican form of government should have been the foremost advocates of such ostentation. To whose advantage would it have been if the Weimarian State had surrounded itself with the traditional trappings

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of monarchy ? Not of the monarchists surely, that is to say if they were really anxious for a restoration. For if the State were to assume a feudal garb, the aristocracies of birth, position and finance would become reconciled all the sooner to the dominant political system. It is so easy to accept and even appreciate institutions which do not clash too violently with one's preconceived ideas.

The main body of those who advocated a restoration was composed of retired officers, Pan-German privy counsellors, big landowners in North Germany, the majority of whom were already past middle age and declined to abandon ideas which had become endeared to them by tradition or custom.

The younger generation of the Right, especially the volunteers who had fought in the war, were entirely adverse to any return to the political and social conditions of the Wilhelminian era. They looked upon Hindenburg as the venerable representative of a 'great era,' but as for putting himself at the head of the reactionaries, that was the last thing they wished him to do.

A large proportion of the nationalist youth of the country had for some time been unconsciously influenced by an undercurrent of revolutionary feeling, a tendency, however, which was least apparent at the time of Hindenburg's election. The era of racist-cum-militarist adventures, the outcome of the volunteer spirit of 1919, had ended for the time being at least, in 1923 and 1924, when the new economic and political order had become firmly established. Ludendorff had already concluded his sensational performances in the Reichstag as the racist leader of more than thirty deputies of the Swastika party.

The factionists of the extreme Right were divided against themselves : one section had gone over to a reactionary party in North Germany, which as yet had gained very

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few adherents among the masses, while the other had joined forces with the social and revolutionary 'labour' movement of Hitler, who was now marking time pending a renewal of his agitation.

Ludendorff's latest appearance in the combined character of a swaggering general of the later Wilhelminian period, an amateur revolutionary, a fop and a blundering and self-sufficient expert, had impressed even the picked troops of the revolutionaries as somewhat ridiculous. They decided for the time being to wait and see what Hindenburg would do and, without committing themselves, to use his military reputation as a political weapon.

The scandals in connection with Kustiker, Barmat and Hoeft had just taken place, the first of their kind under the Republic; many people therefore were inclined to regard Hindenburg as the man who had triumphed over the republic of the profiteers, and who would extricate Germany from its difficulties, eject the 'red' parasites, and make Germany 'honest' once more.

Those who were foremost in denunciating public corruption and mal-administration were for the most part not really interested in the rigorous enforcement of integrity throughout the public service. They regarded the exposure of the hated parvenu class as an end in itself, and it was the 'November criminals' as usual who were held responsible for everything. And anti-Semitic feeling increased in intensity, as invariably happens when a class which has been in undisturbed possession of wealth and privileges suddenly forfeits them as the result of an economic catastrophe.

After all, the deflation scandals of 1924-25 were only one of the consequences of the terrible depreciation of the currency in Germany, and the politicians and economists of the Right were just as responsible, to say the least of it, for this greatest of all financial crises

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as the Marxians, upon whom the expropriated sought to vent their rage by calling them Jews.

An instinct, partly social partly psychological, now led the younger generation of the bourgeoisie, which had been disinherited in consequence of the misfortunes of their country, to scent Jewish swindlers everywhere, and Hindenburg was to expel these 'anti-Germans' from the country.

Nothing could have been sillier than to make exaggerated and unfair demands upon a man who was not only static by nature but was also bound by his office to absolute impartiality. It would have been better had the disgust been merely assumed for tactical purposes, instead of being simply the mouthings of a pack of ridiculous fools.

The German nation, in other respects so intelligent, had unfortunately never deemed it its business to do any political hard thinking, not even during the comparative lull in home and foreign politics which had ensued in 1924 and 1925. There was an obvious deduction to be drawn from Hindenburg's election, but no one seemed capable of doing so.

After all the Left had saved the republic and democracy, which probably would have been seriously imperilled by the election of another adherent of Weimar as president. The Right on the other hand had conferred the supreme authority on a man who had outgrown its narrow world and whose aim was by wise and cautious steps to reconcile its views, which he shared, with those of the present day. Would it not have been wiser from the practical point of view, and to the advantage of the nation from the idealistic point of view, to have healed the schism of 1919 ? But alas ! it was not to be so.

The Left, merely on the strength of its empty ideals, continued to claim the exclusive right of directing the administrative machinery of the Republican State in spite

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of the fact that the Right was taking part in the government of the country in strict accordance with the Constitution. The nationalists refused to be reconciled with the new bourgeois state and to pursue a broadminded policy of compromise which afforded them practical and legal guarantees.

Thus Hindenburg for a time was made to appear in a deceptive light by every party in turn, and therefore rendered impossible as a guide to one and all of them. The Republic was too much like a prism : in her get-up of black, white, red and gold she had become either a butt or an object of contempt. Can we be surprised if Hindenburg at once urgently demanded a 'solution of the colour question' or that he followed up the idea with characteristic earnestness ?

The first practical attempt to solve the problem during the following year led to the fall of his Chancellor Luther. It was difficult to see how the change of flags was to be brought about in view of the conscientious scruples that were still, or rather should we say increasingly, felt with regard to these parti-coloured symbols.

Apart from a certain neutral official class the whole country was deeply committed to the point of embarrassment to one of the two colours. In the course of the political struggles between the old and the new order every single individual with an eye to public opinion had formed the habit of displaying his political sympathies by his allegiance to one or other of these two banners. Even those who were united by a genuinely common interest in obtaining employment were divided by the pathetically superficial question of the flag. In three or four years' time new crises would have arisen and compelled the professional classes to stand together and things would be very different.

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Should a plebiscite be taken on the question ? Hindenburg of course was constitutionally entitled to take the lead in the matter. But would it be merely a repetition of his electoral triumph ? It was very doubtful. The victory would have to be far more complete to be effective. His majority at the final ballot had been small, and not an absolute one at that.

It was no easy matter under the Constitution of Weimar to take a plebiscite on a political question. Obstacles had been deliberately placed in the way of a direct consultation of the people with a view to avoiding the constant unrest that would inevitably be entailed by a frivolous use of this political contrivance. As a matter of fact, the attempt to enforce legislative action by the use of the direct vote of the people has never once been successful since 1919.

The plebiscite as a means of action fails, if a majority of the voters abstain from voting : the decision therefore rests with the non-voters. Abstention is regarded as a very convenient slogan by the public at large in times of political apathy. And the public interest in the affairs of state happened moreover just at that time to be very markedly on the decline.

Why, why were they to be perpetually bothered ? Was not Germany on the up-grade ? To be sure she was, but it was a truth which was not admitted by any section of the nation, either among the socialists or the bourgeoisie. The Marxians were engaged in fighting the new customs duties and in denouncing the 'dear loaf.' Among the Wilhelminian bourgeoisie disillusionment had once more gained the upper hand, a frame of mind which found expression in the saying : "Nothing would ever change in Germany." Whatever was done, as the sceptics said, was sure to be wrong. It happened, moreover, that during the year

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1925 the Government of the Reich had achieved some very remarkable successes in the economic sphere. Not only had the Budget been balanced but a considerable surplus had been retained for future emergencies. Official circles were loudly optimistic, an attitude which at the time was not altogether unjustifiable. Germany still enjoyed 'a breathing space.' The burden of reparations was not felt for the moment, and American loans were pouring into the country. Unemployment was being kept within manageable limits, and the local authorities were engaged in the execution of a vast programme of public works.

Good wages were being earned everywhere, and the standard of civilisation prevailing in other and happier countries was being rapidly attained, an advance that was specially noticeable as regards motors, aviation, wireless, the development of water-power and town planning. The more expensive restaurants were once more crowded after many years of privation. Hosts vied with one another in costly and not infrequently unnecessary display. A thousand and one leagues, associations and societies of every sort and kind which had hitherto been content to pass resolutions at strictly business conferences, now held their sessions amid highly ornate surroundings and combined them with huge social functions.

Germany had become possessed by a mania for conferences. The economic and intellectual result from the point of view of the nation as a whole was perhaps inconsiderable, although perhaps the circulation and exchange of ideas were fostered.

The standard of living of the lower orders rose slowly and infinitesimally, but distress was on the decrease and opportunities of obtaining temporary jobs at profitable rates of pay were by no means infrequent.

Moreover, the foreign tourist traffic showed an enormous

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increase, and our export trade which had suffered so terribly from the deflation had once more begun to expand.

The nation, however, was not in the least grateful for this temporary improvement in its fortunes, which failed to restore confidence or promote reconciliation. Was it the burden of taxation which weighed so oppressively upon trade and still more upon agriculture ? Every generation after all has protested in turn against the rate of public expenditure. Was it apprehensiveness of the future and an instinctive feeling that the boom in Germany was entirely artificial in character and afforded only a temporary respite from the ravages of disease ?

The depression which prevailed in spite of all this apparent prosperity was largely connected with politics. The Republic, we were told, was strengthening its position, but what of that ? The Republic only went skin-deep—the real life of the nation beat beneath the surface. In truth the body politic was ailing. Hindenburg could mitigate and alleviate the symptoms of the disease, but even he could not get rid of the causes to which its condition was due. If the reader ask what these causes were we cannot give him a definite answer. They were the result of a lack of cooperation and the friction which still prevailed both at home and abroad in consequence partly of the destruction of the old Europe at the behest of the victorious powers, and partly of the sudden displacement of political preponderance in the interior which had inevitably followed the collapse.

The Left, it will be said, ought to have stood by the cause of progress and willingly accepted such reforms as modern exigencies rendered necessary. The Right too should have defended its hereditary possessions and the existing order of things.

It was all very well in theory, but in practice it turned out

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to be very different. It was the socialists and not the conservatives as might have been expected who proved to be the most zealous defenders of the conquests of the revolution, whereas the avowed nationalists were advocating a programme which was a mixture of antediluvianism and vague utopianism as the cure for the ills from which the nation was suffering.

In any case these various movements indicative of popular opinion were one and all so out of touch with one another that, save on rare and lucky occasions, the attempts to co-ordinate them were bound to end in discord.

Coincidences of this kind occur not infrequently in the realm of politics, and when they do they are looked upon as a triumph of ingenuity. As a matter of fact, however, they are really due to a temporary paralysis of the adverse factors. Constitutions can only be created by a political society which commands prestige and not by a majority which a year later may very well be a minority. The settlement of Weimar from the point of view of organisation was sufficient for its immediate purposes. But it is possible to systematise disorder, although chaos can be disguised by taking advantage of certain provisions in the constitution.

Moreover, it is not sufficient to appoint a single individual, however intrinsically harmonious his character may be, as was the case with Hindenburg, to secure the observance of the conventions of the constitution and enforce its checks. His authority and official influence may avail to prevent the subversion of what is conventionally called law and order and the general panic which is bound to ensue when disorder stands revealed in all its naked hideousness. In practice, however, such a state of affairs has much in its favour. For obvious disorder is always much more harmful in its effects than a superficial appearance of order ; and

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a general and visible dissolution of society is anything but an essential preparation for sound reconstruction.

But what radical and fundamental remedies could have been adopted in 1925 ? In sober truth there were none available. Other men and another generation were needed who were not torn in two by the contrast between the splendour of the former régime and the apparent baseness of its successor. Another generation was needed which could construct its "third Reich" with the material that lay ready to hand and not on a foundation of sanguinary and inhuman utopianism. Moreover circumstances have altered but little in Germany since then, save only that outward appearances have become more difficult to maintain and that the wirepullers, owing to the appalling political confusion, are less able than formerly to conceal their tactics : and to this extent the change is altogether for the worse.

Much time was still to elapse before Hindenburg's republic became systematically organised. Such a statement does not imply any diminution of his merits as the mentor of so self-willed a pupil. At any rate he preserved the sick child that was Germany from its worst mishaps. As time went on the sacrifices entailed upon him by this uncomfortable mission became more and more severe, but however burdensome his task he faced it unflinchingly. Was it going to prove more easy for the nation to determine the extent of its liberty abroad under a chosen leader than gradually to acquire spiritual unity ? What was expected of this old strategist who had triumphantly held half a continent for so many years against a world of foes ?

Hindenburg had succumbed to the superior forces of the Allied Nations, but he had never lost his faith in Germany in the midst of his disasters. What if he were

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now to assume the rôle of the champion of peace, and strike another blow on behalf of his country : would not his fellow-countrymen be justified in that event in confidently expecting him to free the nation from its fetters ? But there was no justification for their doing so, at any rate in the ingenuous way they went about it, which involved them in a great deal of sentimental deception. The Germans were not, or at any rate had ceased to be, helots ; but they were still restrained and controlled, distressed upon and robbed, unfree enough in any case to desire vaguely the restoration of their self-respect and liberty of action, and to be treated abroad with the same consideration as of yore.

Hindenburg was looked upon as symbolising the nation in arms. Millions of enthusiastic and respectful admirers pictured him as a giant leaning on his sword and bidding defiance to those who would threaten the soil of Germany : so at least he appeared to them in those three-coloured prints, which imaginative and patriotic painters had produced in thousands to satisfy the primitive cravings of the multitude. The conception of the defender of our liberty keeping watch on the Rhine and the Vistula was crude enough, especially when applied to political and not to military conditions. The nation, however, was not composed solely of councillors of legation, and the German bourgeoisie were too convinced of the justice of our claims upon our adversaries to be able to distinguish between electoral cries and international realities.

Hindenburg's first intervention in foreign politics as President of the Reich occurred in connection with a note of the Entente on the subject of disarmament, one of those unpleasant warning missives which the pedantic generals of our foes were in the habit of sending us, calling attention to our bad conduct generally and our infringement of the

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school regulations by playing with prohibited firearms. By rights Germany was no longer subject to foreign military control ; but these fussy old gentlemen were never at a loss for one last final protest. A few old fortress guns had not been dismounted or a few old rusty weapons had been discovered in a shed, and the security of the victorious powers, they alleged, was therefore still in danger.

These pretexts, absurd as they must appear to any unprejudiced person, were means which if unscrupulously used could be made to serve very important political ends. Germany was not to be allowed to purchase her freedom unless she gave fresh pledges and undertook further obligations. After a great deal of protracted and angry discussion in Berlin, the German point of view was officially and definitely established at a Cabinet council at the presidential palace. The presence of Hindenburg in the chair unfortunately did not relieve us of the necessity of sending a submissive answer, and the 'saviour' was compelled to give his benediction to those very diplomatists who had been denounced by every Prussian general since the days of Blücher. The only way, indeed, in which Germany could regain her liberty was by taking skilful and patient advantage of the state of slavery to which she had been reduced. It was to the recognition of this fundamental fact that the much abused and misunderstood policy of fulfilment was due. Erzberger and Rathenau, who had been the first to negotiate on our behalf after the armistice and the conclusion of peace, had been murdered by the nationalists for having employed these self-denying and unheroic methods. Admittedly a small parliamentary majority could always be found to take the responsibility for this unpopular policy of renunciation and apparent weakness, a majority, however, which only existed thanks

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to the assistance of the socialist deputies, and was never representative of the main drift of public opinion until Stresemann became Hindenburg's foreign minister.

Erzberger's and Rathenau's policy of fulfilment consisted partly in offering sums of money and pledging themselves to future payments which Germany could not possibly afford, and partly in allowing such pledges and offers to be extorted from them by ultimatums. Their aim was to prove the unfeasibility of fulfilment by dint of goodwill, an idea which was quite sound in theory, but which unfortunately turned out to be susceptible of misapplication in practice, with the result that a series of unfortunate incidents occurred, and that so trifling an incident as the non-delivery of a few telegraph poles was eventually made the pretext by France of a rupture that was really due to her obstinate refusal as a matter of principle to recognise the extreme lengths to which Germany had gone in the way of sacrifice in order to reach an agreement.

Germany now began a defensive war which was inspired by sheer desperation. In furtherance of the policy of passive resistance which was now decided upon, all payments were suspended and a general strike proclaimed in the areas which had been occupied as pledges. It was war in the midst of peace. The French seized the stocks of coal at the pitheads and stole the contents of safes and occasionally even of portfolios, took hostages, brought actions against the recalcitrant, and finally expelled the German officials and the local trade-union leaders.

The struggle proved so fatal to the currency of Germany that she was eventually compelled to withdraw from the contest. The country indeed, both socially and economically, was much nearer dissolution than it had been after the revolution of November. It seemed to be menaced by

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'a terrible end,' an end which it was obvious would be far worse than the 'endless terror.' The nationalist theory which had inflamed the popular indignation for six months past ceased to make converts. As the heat engendered by the struggle slowly died away, the pitilessly calculating spirit by which the neighbours of Germany were actuated stood revealed in all its fulness. She was even less free than before and, as if the journey to Compiègne had not been enough, was compelled to surrender and go to Canossa once more.

Suddenly the world woke up and her enemies ceased to harry her. If you Germans are reasonable, they said, we will refrain in future from demanding impossibilities of you. Then began another series of conferences and bargainings as to supplies of labour, standards of living, the Dawes Plan and a breathing space. A commissioner of tribute was sent to Berlin. Western Germany in the meantime remained even more at the mercy of our foes than in the days of Rathenau.

In the meantime the Rentenmark had worked wonders, indeed our representatives had scarcely signed the new pact of slavery in London with many a moan and groan when the Germans woke up once more to the fact that they were up-to-date civilised Europeans, and proceeded to peregrinate the countries from which they had hitherto been excluded, where to their surprise they found the inhabitants much less arrogant and prosperous than had been anticipated.

At the end of 1924, however, the country was swept with another wave of indignation. The Cologne area, the surrender of which under the provisions of the treaty was due in January, was not evacuated. The French nationalists mockingly proclaimed that the period of occupation had not yet begun to run. What was the use of legal protests

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when might was on the side of the lawbreakers ? Our opponents, it is true, could parade a few shreds of justification for their action in the sight of the world ; but Germany was too righteously indignant to notice them. Thus during the months between Ebert's death and Hindenburg's election the European sky once more became charged with electricity. It was no longer a financial, but a purely political issue, for Germany's territorial, military and diplomatic liberty were at stake.

During the presidential election a German newspaper had made the following prophecy. "Helfferich, the creator of the Rentenmark, has resharpened our financial sword, and Hindenburg's mighty blade will rout the enemy and drive him out of the country." Stripped of its bombast this verbiage merely meant that Hindenburg would restore us our freedom. He did so, indeed, but by slow stages and by methods which were sharply repudiated by the nationalists of the Right. It was not to be done by some dramatic gesture as the veterans' associations had doubtless supposed. No, it was to be achieved in very different fashion. Germany was once more to be compelled to recognise the consequences of her defeat, and then and then only, after many further delays and the application of circuitous methods, to shake off gradually the fetters which limited her political sovereignty.

Stresemann was Hindenburg's chief expert and agent in matters of foreign policy. The commencement of the liberator's supremacy coincided with the advent of the second president to office. Stresemann's previous achievements in connection with the liquidation of the struggle in the Ruhr had not been due to any peculiar initiative on his part, his rôle had been a purely passive one. The events which had happened were bound to occur, and anyone else could have probably brought them about.

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But now he had matured his own plan. The international solution may perhaps have originated with certain English League of Nations enthusiasts : it certainly formed part of the repertory of Lord Cecil. France demanded security which England declined to afford her by means of an alliance, and the Geneva protocol and the formulas of guarantee were too diplomatically vague. Well, what was to be done about it ? What about a guarantee of the principal European powers, and a voluntary treaty of security between Germany and the Entente, combined with an arbitration convention to settle any questions which might threaten the peace of the Rhineland, in fact a carefully regulated system of friendship ? All this for the present merely afforded food for leading articles, speeches at banquets in London and tea-parties at Geneva. In the absence of co-operation on the part of Germany all such projects were meaningless, and in Berlin the Nationalist majority were inveighing against 'perpetual slavery.' The conclusion of a pact of guarantee with Germany would amount, they proclaimed, to an emphatic admission on our part of the justice of the system of servitude imposed upon us at Versailles.

Stresemann, however, thought otherwise ; it was by means of this very issue, in fact, that he hoped to attain political equality. He discussed this political venture with a few open-minded colleagues : they were struck by the ingenuity of the idea, but shook their heads doubtfully. "Are you really thinking of doing it," they asked, "at this moment, and when Hindenburg of all people is in office and German National Ministers are in the Government?"

Nevertheless Stresemann sounded the British Government. Chamberlain was very doubtful about it. "Provided you don't try to impose further conditions," the German warned him, "it might be feasible." He was

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anxious to be the first in the field with the German proposals, and not to have to take his directions from his old adversaries. At the very hint of the idea the nation had already begun to protest.

Intriguers set to work to undermine his influence with Hindenburg, and the old gentleman, whose experience of the game of international politics was limited to the gigantic frauds of the World War, began to feel that his foreign minister, to say the least of it, was a bit of a busybody and inclined to rush matters. He is said at this juncture to have described Stresemann to a confidential friend as Erzberger all over again. The Higher Command had retained the most unpleasant recollections of this pretentious individual, who had always claimed to possess the secret of unravelling the most complicated problems.

Several months accordingly elapsed before Hindenburg realised the creative genius of his minister and the portentous nature of his plans. The curve of the relations between the two men followed a course similar to that between William I and Bismarck. In each case the statesman was hindered in the pursuit of his aims by the inability of the head of the state to appreciate his genius. A succession of more or less serious crises then ensued, and it was only when they had been happily overcome that the two men were able to work usefully together. Eventually the statesman gained the confidence of his master so completely that he was almost invariably able to act upon his own responsibility.

It must be confessed that Stresemann, like Bismarck, gradually became more unpopular with his colleagues and friends as his international reputation increased, an unfortunate circumstance that was due less to the petulance engendered by success than to the temperamental inability

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of an impetuous nature to bear with contradiction. Stresemann was energy personified. He had inherited the patriotism of the lesser bourgeoisie of the Wilhelminian era, which so often proved a source of delusion to its possessors. Eventually the syndic and deputy threw off the trammels imposed upon him by party discipline and narrow-minded economists. He earned but little gratitude, for most of his adherents fell away when they felt his fall to be impending.

But he disappointed the careerists, foiled the intriguers, and seemed to derive fresh vigour from opposition. He was possessed by a sort of political frenzy, which enabled him to rise superior to the ailments of the flesh. The intense self-assertion of Stresemann in his last phase would have been hideously repugnant to a man like Hindenburg, had not the President realised long since that so passionate a fighter must be allowed to let off steam in his own way.

His political well-wishers grew steadily in number, but he made no friends and never became popular. His nature and his task lacked the charm of the absolute, which is incompatible with complexity. Both as an orator and a man of action he compelled respect for his ability, the weight of his arguments and the value of his achievements. It was the presence of Hindenburg behind him, however, which conferred upon him that prestige which he could never have permanently acquired, either as leader of the German People's Party or by his brilliant performances in the sphere of international diplomacy. Had not Hindenburg been in command and behind him, he would never have been accounted more than a clever political bargainer.

For four long years Stresemann championed the cause of Germany and Europe with varying fortunes and with gradually increasing success; nervously impatient as he was for the success of his policy, an occasional setback would plunge him into the depths of despondency, and it

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was then that Hindenburg's calm encouragement proved a tower of strength to him. Several times he came back empty-handed from the Geneva Conference and poured out his grievances to the President in jerky spasmodic sentences, and was merely told by the latter to inform the public of his satisfaction at what had been attained.

These small human incidents only took place, of course, in the privacy of the presidential study. But from the point of view of the historian, they are another striking proof of the fact that Hindenburg always puts duty first ; for his attitude lost him the esteem of the Right, who were continually but vainly hoping that he would at last get rid of Stresemann. When Hindenburg, on the other hand, as was occasionally the case, showed no interest in Stresemann's domestic political programme in which the Left was keenly interested, the latter would argue that he was allowing himself to be influenced by 'irresponsible advisers' against Stresemann.

It was in the autumn of 1925 that the first act of the drama of liberation began, a wearisome performance that was to put the patience of the actors and the public to a severe test. The scene was Locarno, a delightful little health resort in the south of Switzerland. This town, which hitherto had been ignored by the international travelling agencies, was henceforth to possess a world-wide political significance. The 'Policy of Locarno' was to be the slogan, the patent medicine that was to cure Europe.

It was a wonderfully mild autumn that year, and the negotiators spent their time chatting on the hotel terraces or sailing up and down the dark blue mountain lake on a little steamer which had been appropriately christened the *Orange Blossom*.

Even the company assembled round the fateful table in the tiny town hall, where the foundations of the brother-

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hood of nations were being laid, were infected by this auspicious mood. Luther and Stresemann, the cautious Chancellor and the more venturesome Foreign Minister, had come there to represent Germany.

What were the issues? 'Security,' of course. 'A pact of non-aggression,' the entry of Germany into the League of Nations, peace on the Rhine, arbitration conventions, etc. The Reich, however, and this was the main point, was expected to swallow a certain number of exceedingly bitter though sugar-coated pills at the outset, such as the recognition of the status created by the Treaty of Versailles on our western frontier, and the right of the troops of the Allies to march through Germany in the event of Russia attacking Poland. By way of compensation hopes were held out of 'reactions,' including a promise of evacuation and the cessation of the petty vexations which were technically justified by the terms of the Treaty of Peace. Germany was henceforth to be one of the Locarno Powers, and together with Briand and Chamberlain, *i.e.* England and France, and a few other assessors, was to "take counsel with a view to discovering the best means of obviating the evil effect of the war upon the world and bringing about an agreement among the peaceably disposed nations."

Each clause was carefully scrutinised with a view to discovering its possible implications, and at length the main issues were reached. The victors by this time were in a most generous mood, and Stresemann accordingly accepted their proposals. He may have been too optimistic, he may have under-estimated the difficulties and obstacles with which he would soon be confronted both at home and abroad. Nevertheless, he was right to do so. His courageous action, so far from being followed by disastrous results, originated a new international practice.

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In Berlin a tremendous uproar broke out in Government circles. The Minister of the Interior, a German Nationalist of the name of Schiele, who was acting as temporary head of the Government, consulted Hindenburg as to his line of action. Never, he assured him, would the Nationalists' champions assent to it. An honest farmer, endowed with a fund of homely but limited commonsense, he was anxious above all not to allow a breach to be created between his party and its President of the Reich. He telegraphed to Lago Maggiore begging the delegates to defer their decision and not to sign. The latter, however, had already initialled the agreement as a sign that they were willing to stand by their engagements, and Schiele found himself in the position of having both to defend and condemn their action.

His party was up in arms ; it was a second and worse edition of Versailles ! But ministers were responsible to the Reich and to the nation, which could not exist on a diet of hatred. Could not the treaty be amended or our final decision deferred ? Very likely in that event the nationalist hotspurs would be amenable to reason. Would not Hindenburg . . . ?

Hindenburg declined to take any action until he was in possession of further information. In any case, whether it suited the party or not, he was not going to be influenced by the stubborn or the timid in making up his mind.

The German National Ministers were compelled to resign, and the Government was split from top to bottom. The members of the party who belonged to the Land Union, the majority of whom were the ex-majors and land-owners who had helped him so bravely in April, had forgotten most of their former professions. Do not let us blame them for doing so : constitutional government would be impossible if those who voted for a president found themselves bound to agree with his executive action

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under any and every circumstance whatever. It was painful enough for the nationalists as it was to have to retire from the Hindenburg front and abandon their candidate to the mercies of Luther and Stresemann.

But how were these members of the Right, who had deliberately gone out into the wilderness, to justify their conduct to the credulous masses who were expecting Hindenburg to work a miracle for Germany ? It was a lamentable fact, they told him, but the President was bound to agree with a government, however stupidly it acted. It was all the fault of these rotten democratic institutions—but Hindenburg was all right. Three cheers for Hindenburg !

These dishonest tactics were persisted in for several years, till at last, just as the campaign of liberation which had begun at Locarno was drawing to a close, Hugenberg abandoned all further pretence, and the sadly-diminished band of die-hards dissociated themselves once for all from Hindenburg and Germany. By this time ‘the saviour’ had done his work, but those who had christened him so in 1925 had no part nor lot in it.

The crisis which took place in the autumn of the first year of his presidency started the process of fermentation afresh in those elements which have again and again hindered if not prevented the popular forces solidifying into a state. The immature wine was none the better for being stored in new bottles. The bourgeoisie, however, had found the bouquet surprisingly good when they first tasted it. The critics of the new régime began to formulate their objections in much more respectful language, while the uncritical were delighted by the ceremonies and popular fêtes which marked Hindenburg’s inaugural visits to the various states and provinces. The Reichsbanner, which was preponderantly socialistic in its composition, still took

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no part in his reception in the various provincial capitals, but active hostility on the part of those who had opposed him at his election was rapidly ceasing. It was felt that these fêtes, at which this patriarchal head of the State came to show himself to the nation, were ceremonies in which every good German could take part.

Even before Luther and Stresemann had set out, with their heavy burden of political top-hamper, on their journey to Locarno, Hindenburg had made a solemn progress through the Ruhr, whence the French battalions, whose presence had given such offence, had been finally withdrawn. Men of all classes and opinions agreed to sink their differences for a few short happy days while he was with them, and for once in their lives proletarians and millionaires, socialist masses and pan-Germanic leaders were united by their consciousness of a common nationality. The throb of machinery, the roar of the furnaces and the rattle of the cages swelled into a chorus as if to celebrate the virtues of labour, which has usually proved more degrading than elevating to mankind. Nowhere was the gap between high and low, the mighty and the serf, more apparent. Here was the mighty hall of Krupp, the great captain of industry, where seven years previously William II had vainly endeavoured to reinspire these disappointed and rebellious men with the spirit of August 1914, and monarchy had sung its swan song.

At that time men and masters, of course, had been unconscious of the seven lean years that awaited them. The strikes which had ensued had been bad enough, but they had been followed by the civil war of 1920, the effect of which was disastrous to the all too sensitive nerves of a population overwrought by toil and massacre. Then came the French soldiery, who stamped out the last remaining sparks of vitality of this huge labour colony, and when

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this giant, half-man half-steel, staggered once more to his feet, the social distress, the antagonism between the brain and its members, the bondsmen and those who profited by their labours, was still to be allayed.

Hindenburg's presence in an area which in spite of its emancipation was full of menace and gloomy apprehensions inspired the inhabitants with such a happy feeling of solidarity that their fears were immediately dispelled. What could he promise or bestow upon them? No earthly paradise, nothing more tangible indeed than the undoubted right to exercise their free-will: he could not enlarge the sphere of their private and public liberties. Nevertheless he was the living and symbolical expression of a power that was mightier even than that of a managing director or a trade-union secretary. There was something in the homeland, it appeared, besides the daily round of toil, something more comforting than Utopia. That kindly old man there was "Germany, above everyone and everything" that stood for civil discord.

If Hindenburg was to reduce Germany to a common denominator it was not by practising the trade of a politician that he could do so. He could do nothing to alter the effects of the terrible weeks of strife which had marked the advent of the republican régime nor raise Germany from the sick-bed to which she had been confined ever since her terrible fall in 1918. But he brought an atmosphere of idealism into the lives of all those who were not entirely materialised and comfort to those who in spite of the heart-rending collapse of all that was dear to them still retained their belief in popular institutions as the basis of national reconciliation.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A BREATHING SPACE

"THE depressing spectacle of these perpetual government crises must be put an end to." Such was the burden of the President's message to the Nation on New Year's Day, 1926. Luther had not had much luck as Chancellor of the Rump Government after the resignation of the German Nationalists and had spent the whole of the Christmas holidays trying to form a new one. Hindenburg now sent for the respective party chiefs and told them that their squabbles had gone on long enough and that the game of pot and kettle had got to be finished by 10 p.m.

Luther managed to form a 'Minority Government' which disposed of a majority of ten in the Reichstag ; but it was only owing to the abstention of the socialists, who had learned wisdom in the meantime, that the Government was able to survive. The evacuation of the first zone of occupation including the towns of Cologne and Bonn was a welcome relief, coming as it did after these sorry parliamentary experiences, although the general satisfaction was considerably tempered by the fact that it was a year overdue.

Immediately afterwards there arose what turned out to be the most important internal political crisis of the year, in connection with the indemnification of the princes and the property of the former ruling dynasties of Germany. It was a controversy in which not only legal questions, but

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the profoundest moral issues were involved. Was it fair that the former ruling families should be left in undisputed possession of those huge fortunes, which they had been able to amass in the heyday of their power, and of property to the value of many millions which had served to consolidate and add lustre to their dignity as rulers ?

These various kings and highnesses had been very modest in presenting their claims for indemnities, pensions, advances and arrears during the years immediately following the revolution when there had still been some danger in doing so. Now, however, that Germany had once more become a predominantly bourgeois and capitalist state, they determined to risk everything to establish their claims before the supreme tribunals of the land, even though their demands were based upon documents which in some cases were more than seven hundred years old.

The Law Committee of the Reichstag introduced a suspensory bill, the effect of which was to put a stop to any litigation with the dynasties until an Act had been passed by the Reichstag setting up a special tribunal to decide the controversy on the principles of equity.

Progress, however, was slow ; so the extremists determined to take the initiative. Their aim was to bring about the expropriation of the ex-royal families without compensation by means of the initiative and the referendum. All parties from the Communists to the Centre were in favour of this drastically exceptional measure, which if carried against the ex-royal families would have dealt a very severe blow to the rights of property.

Three separate schools of opinion contended for the mastery. First of all the strictly individualist and capitalist school, which regarded property as sacred and held that royalty was entitled to everything it had possessed up to 1918, a principle which was immediately appropriated

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by the forces of political reaction who secretly hoped that the royal money-bags thus replenished would supply them with funds for monarchical propaganda.

The more moderate and capitalistic republicans advocated a social compromise : let the princes, they said, be granted a sufficient revenue to live as becomes their distinguished position ; let them retain sufficient property and money to enable them to live in accordance with their aristocratic traditions, but not a penny more, a theory which subordinated their historical rights to their social requirements, on the principle that property is something that is held on trust for the community and can be confiscated or curtailed if political circumstances no longer render the original grant justifiable.

According to the third and most extreme school, any property not acquired as the reward of productive labour was theft, a conception that was based upon Marxian utopianism.

For several months the nation was in a state of seething fury. The princes themselves entered very little into the controversy in which far wider social and legal issues were at stake. Fundamental conceptions were in a state of flux, for while beyond the upper hundred thousand there were probably very few who regarded property as sacred under any and every circumstance, the theory that property was theft was one which failed to appeal to the mentality of the average citizen. Where would they be if the envious were to take away all that they had ! Nevertheless more than 15½ millions of voters gave their votes at the referendum in favour of expropriation without indemnity—five million more votes than were cast for Hindenburg when he was elected President.

The men of the old ruling caste began to stir. The old conservative ministers of the monarchy, generals, court

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officials, felt that the time had come for them to translate their loyalty to their former sovereigns into political action. They failed to understand that the idea of property was passing through a critical stage and imagined that the princes were being robbed merely because they had sat upon a throne.

Led by ex-Minister von Loebell, they now approached Hindenburg. The President himself was not a fanatical adherent of the idea of property, which he had always regarded from the point of view of service ; nevertheless he was persuaded into writing an emotional letter to Loebell, in which he pleaded the cause of the princes. His arguments were manly and unobjectionable in substance. His attempt to prejudice the free expression of the popular will was, however, unfortunate. Sentences like the following were liable to be misinterpreted :

“ That one who like myself has spent his life in the service of the Kings of Prussia and of the German Emperors should regard this referendum not only as grossly unfair but also as betraying a lamentable lack of respect and an absence of elementary gratitude cannot surprise you. . . . The legal recognition of property is the foundation of a constitutionally governed state. The expropriation proposals are an offence against morality and justice.”

The socialists raised a tremendous outcry in the Reichstag, for they too claimed that their campaign in favour of expropriation was inspired by a regard for morality and justice. It was entirely a question of opinion, and authoritative pronouncements on the subject were valueless. Even under the Constitution of the Reich the rights of property were only guaranteed with certain due reservations.

The public eventually ceased to interest themselves in this wretched business, which was never finally settled by

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federal action. The German free states were consequently compelled to compromise with their former rulers. What was attainable could have been secured by one and all with much less expenditure of time and trouble.

Little though it had to do with many of our vital problems, tradition loomed very large just then in public life. A bill was passed forbidding the members of the Reichswehr to take part in duels in defence of their honour or whatever the legal equivalent thereof might be. The parliament of the Reich passed the bill, but Hindenburg refused to sign it. Officers, he said, were being discriminated against as a class. Was that really the case ? Exciting discussions on the platform and in the press took place, as might naturally have been expected in view of the chivalrous and romantic nature of the subject. The country would have done better to have attended to more important business.

In any case the Reichswehr proved an inexhaustible theme of discussion. Another incident had just occurred, trifling enough in itself though it entailed the resignation of that able soldier and protector of the Republic, General von Seeckt, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army. Seeckt had allowed the son of the Crown Prince, the grandson of the Emperor, to take part in the manœuvres as a lieutenant, a rank which he owed to his princely birth. It certainly was not quite suitable from the point of view of the Republic ; but that its most competent general was bound to take a similar view did not seem quite sound on reflection, least of all to the President, who, nevertheless was unable to disregard the popular indignation.

Another startling semi-military, semi-political incident which occurred in the Reichstag towards the end of 1926 was to be attended by more serious consequences. The Social Democrats by the mouth of their old warrior

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Scheidemann were trying to penetrate the mystery of the Russo-German alliance. Close relations had been established between the military experts of the Reichswehr and of Soviet Russia with a view to the exchange of technical discoveries, especially with regard to aeroplanes and poison gas. Rumour was much more exciting than the reality. The avowed adversaries of what may be termed 'National Bolshevism,' chief among them Arthur Mahraun the valiant leader of the 'Order of Young Germans,' declined, in view of their recent change of attitude with regard to our European foreign policy, to lend themselves, Nationalists though they were, to these friendly experiments with red Russia. Scheidemann's revelations had an effect that was not intended by their author, for his carelessness led to the fall of the Marx Government.

The Left had come down upon his predecessor, Luther, in the spring, like a bolt from the blue. Inspired by his untimely zeal for the black, white and red colours Luther had come out with a ridiculous regulation to the effect that the German diplomatic representatives abroad were to be allowed to fly the black, white and red jack as well as our ships of war. This well-meaning but sentimental attempt to satisfy the claims of tradition gave offence in a great many quarters and satisfied nobody. On that occasion, Hindenburg had sought to cover his Chancellor by writing him a letter approving of his conduct, but in vain, and now after a very doubtful start Marx found himself similarly at odds with his unreliable minority.

Hindenburg let the parties perform their usual manœuvres for a few weeks. A never-ending crisis at the turn of the year had come to be regarded as customary. In any case, it was the third time that a defeated government had come to the presidency to present its New Year's congratulations to its occupant. The fractions were drilled

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and drilled, but in vain ; time after time things went wrong or they failed to keep step.

At last matters got serious, and the old President's patience became exhausted. He took over the command and told them to pay attention to his orders only. A government of the Right was to be formed, he told them, and the socialists were to be left out of it. Their services were not required just then, any more than Hindenburg's had been in 1919. Marx, the former presidential candidate of the Left, was to take charge of this venture with the Right. Hindenburg's letter is a classical example of upright and responsible leadership.

" I now request you, Mr. Chancellor, to form without delay a government composed of a majority of the bourgeois parties in the Reichstag. At the same time I appeal to the fractions of the Reichstag in question to waive their personal objections and divergencies of views in the interests of the Fatherland, to co-operate one and all under your leadership, and to unite in supporting a government whose aim is not to govern in the interests of any one party in particular, but to promote the welfare of the Fatherland in strict obedience to the Constitution. It will be the duty of this new government, although the parties of the Left are not represented in it, to regard the protection of the legitimate interests of the German working classes as of no less importance than the other essential needs of the State."

The effect of this manifesto was marvellous. In a few days Potsdam and Weimar had made up their differences and the first coalition government was an accomplished fact, the first genuine combination, moreover, between the old order and the new, for the government of the Right which had been in office when Hindenburg was elected was merely a feeble and incoherent collection of individuals.

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Even now certain preliminaries had to be gone through which were painful enough. It was obviously not going to be such a simple affair as the populists of the nationalist parties supposed. One of Hugenberg's followers, Graef by name, was nominated by the German Nationalists as candidate for a ministerial post. In view, however, of the latter's refusal to call officially upon President Ebert during his Vice-Presidency of the Reichstag, Hindenburg declined to appoint him, an action which did him the greatest credit. Herr von Keudell, a German Nationalist and the son of Bismarck's old friend, became Minister of the Interior. The new guardian of the Constitution was commonly said to have supported the Kapp insurrection while serving as a sub-prefect, an accusation that was made against every member of the extreme Right, till at length Hindenburg put a stop to this disinterment of the past.

At last a government was in office that could govern, and orderly progress became possible. There were no brilliant successes to be recorded, but in view of the general effervescence of opinion they were not to be expected. Nevertheless, grumbling diminished and wounds began to smart less. The German Nationalists actually voted for the prolongation of the law of republican defence which forbade the return of the Emperor to Germany. Unfortunately the bourgeoisie could not hold together, and rumblings were heard on the extreme Right, which seemed to portend fundamental opposition on the part of the nationalists. The democratic party maintained an attitude of reserve in order not to lose touch with the main body of the socialists.

German policy was suffering, and was for some time to suffer, from the fallacy which underlay every one of the attempts to govern with the aid of the Right or Left. A

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government of the Left had been just as inevitable in 1919 as one of the Right was in 1924, one of the Left in 1928 and one of the Right in 1930. True, these appellations take no account of those urgent acts of State which every government is bound to accomplish. In England the parties usually realise the direction of the course to be steered, whereas in Germany over-zealous groups are always struggling to get hold of the helm, and government too often becomes impossible. The middle parties, which represent such valuable elements from the point of view of the State, are unduly inclined to weakness and compromise in consequence.

Viewed retrospectively the year 1927 turns out to have been the quietest and calmest period since the revolution and the foundation of the Republic. Hindenburg's office and person had almost ceased to be the objects of controversy. Even then, however, it could have been safely prophesied that this period of sobriety would not be of long duration. For beneath this calm expanse currents were running whose eddies would soon break the mirror-like surface.

This period of temporary appeasement, this prolonged breathing space as it were, was of no immediate advantage from the point of view of our foreign policy. During the year 1926 Germany's claim to the status of a Great Power had been materially advanced. Stresemann's field of action at Geneva had been considerably narrowed by the intrigues and unmannerly behaviour to which he had been exposed, and it was only when Germany became a member of the permanent council of the world powers that she was able to take full advantage of his powerful advocacy. Her international prestige rose rapidly, and the time seemed near at hand when equality of treatment would no longer be withheld from her.

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In 1927, however, there was another hitch ; the atmosphere on the Continent had become more oppressive and the outlook less encouraging. No crisis occurred, but doubts, disillusionment and impatience were apparent on all sides. Germany at once set to work to discover the cause of the delay and the means of obviating it. Might not the wretched old war guilt lie have something to do with it ? Might it not be advisable to combat the theory of our sole responsibility by means of an international campaign of propaganda, and to make another emphatic official protest ? Many patriotic men were inclined to favour this course, and scientific research and the cause of popular enlightenment as to the causes of the war accordingly received a fresh impulse. Germany, in fact, was appealing to the intelligence of the world for a re-trial of her case. Would her efforts bear fruit ? And, above all, was this the main cause of her misfortunes ? The answer lay in the womb of the future.

In the middle of September Hindenburg sailed in the cruiser *Berlin* from Swinemünde to take part in the inaugural ceremonies in East Prussia. The fortress-like monument which had been erected on the battlefield of Tannenberg was a fane of patriotic remembrance rather than a war memorial, for it had been purposely planned on a large enough scale to enable the mightiest German demonstrations to be held therein. Erected as it had been by the generous contributions of the whole nation on a spot where lads and men of every condition and party had fought and died and conquered, it might well have been dedicated to the cause of national unity.

The laying of the foundation stone, however, had been marked by an unfortunate incident two years previously. The President of the Memorial Committee, an old major-general, had declared as he laid the stone that the blows

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of his hammer "had welded the Imperial German Crown afresh." The 'Reichsbanner' and the Association of Jewish ex-servicemen had been slighted and humiliated by the nationalist Committee of Management and refused to take part in the inaugural ceremony, and the Prussian Ministry in its annoyance at the undue prominence given to the black, white and red associations, declined at the eleventh hour to attend. The Government of the Reich, headed by the Chancellor, took part in the ceremony, as was natural in view of its political complexion, and the absence of the Reichsbanner, which had fought so hard against Hindenburg on behalf of Marx, was hardly noticed by the latter.

After a solemn landing in the harbour of Königsberg Hindenburg drove to the Castle of Markienen, the property of Herr von Berg, the agent of the ex-emperor—a circumstance which, to the great regret of the republicans, lent a monarchical colour to the whole proceedings.

It had been common knowledge for some time past that Hindenburg was going to make a political speech at the Tannenberg ceremony, and that the Cabinet had approved of its contents : he was going to deal a crushing blow to the war-guilt lie. Even with the worst will in the world, no one could have raised any valid objection to his aim in repudiating our guilt. On the other hand, many people, some of whom were by no means adherents of the extreme Left, wondered whether it was tactfully advisable for him to lend himself to a demonstration which was bound to have a world-wide repercussion, and had been so carefully staged and timed by the military party.

The Government, although strongly urged to do so by its German Nationalist sympathisers, was unwilling for tactical and diplomatic reasons to act officially in the matter. But were they therefore to drag the President into the arena of controversy ? After all, even if he did no

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good he could do no harm, and in any case he would revive the fainting spirits of many of his old adherents.

Sunday the 18th of September dawned dull grey with a touch of autumn in the air. A huge army of veterans, citizens, and school children had been collecting since day-break, and was now nearly a hundred thousand strong. The colour-party of the Reichswehr which was present wore the badges of the regiments that fought at Tannenberg in 1914 ; and the three old Prussian army corps, the 1st, 17th and 18th Corps, which had formed the 8th Army, were represented by their respective banners.

Hindenburg appeared on the scene of his first victory escorted by a regiment of cavalry and wearing the uniform of his Masurian regiment, the 147th, of which his king had appointed him colonel. The white flags with the black cross of the Order in the centre and the old and new colours of the Reich were flying from every tower and battlement. In the faint morning light the brickwork of the monument assumed a blood-red hue. The mighty bulwark which covered the whole of a small plateau was octagonal in shape, and consisted of eight towers and a connecting wall with a court of honour in the centre. The tower commanding the entrance was dedicated to Hindenburg and the one facing it to the 'German field-greys,' the others to various generals and regimental colours.

Many people wondered why none of them was dedicated to peace or to the nation, for indeed the whole ceremony was exclusively martial in character. The chairman of the reception committee in welcoming Hindenburg expressed the hope that this patriotic celebration and 'the spirit of Tannenberg' might prove a turning-point in the liberation of the German east. What spirit was he conjuring up ? Who was hoping for liberation by war and who by peace ?

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In the excitement of the festivities no one paused to think about it.

Ludendorff had been invited as one of the guests of honour. It was the first time that Hindenburg had met his old comrade-in-arms since his election to the presidency. But what a meeting it was ! They shook hands, but what could they say to one another, the differences between them were too great. Ludendorff seemed out of place among the other generals ; an invisible wall separated him from the others, who hardly exchanged a word with the mischievous agitator. Eventually, as the ceremony was drawing to a close, he went away almost alone, and was consoled by the homage of some of the extremist societies of the Right.

In the meantime Hindenburg had made his protest, and his words had been carried by the amplifiers to the remotest corner of the silent throng of earnest listeners, and not only they but the whole world had heard him say : “ The accusation that Germany is responsible for this greatest of all wars we hereby repudiate—all classes of the German people unanimously repudiate it ! It was not envy, hate or desire of conquest that made us draw the sword. . . . With clean hearts we marched out to defend the Fatherland, and with clean hands did we wield the sword. Germany is ready at any moment to prove this fact before impartial judges ! In numerous graves, the symbols of German heroism, rest men of every party without distinction. . . . May every discord therefore break in vain against this monument. . . . ”

A service was then held in the open air before a pine-clad altar, after which Hindenburg proceeded to open the gates that led to the Court of Honour, where the wreaths lay heaped round a sword that pointed heavenwards. “ Lord ! make us free.” The Field Marshal—for in that capacity he was acting—deposited a green laurel wreath

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in honour of the fallen, and then stood for hours while the patriotic associations marched by him.

On that identical Sunday the French Marshal Pétain stood on the hellish ridge of Douaumont and extolled the spirit of self-sacrifice of his countrymen who had defended Verdun. He spoke of the ‘spirit of civilisation,’ which he hoped would give birth to a new, that is to say, a Gallicised Europe. His vanquished Fatherland and his desire to cleanse it from the guilt of World War had been Hindenburg’s one thought. But what was the reply? Every country with the exception of Germany considered Hindenburg’s language unsuitable, and democrats of all countries, including those of Germany, declared both Hindenburg’s and Pétain’s speeches to have been superfluous. The German Marshal, however, did not worry, his conscience was easy.

The Tannenberg celebrations were followed a fortnight later by another German festival of which Hindenburg alone was the hero, when he reaped the fruits not of one individual action but of his long career. On the 2nd of October he celebrated his eightieth birthday. For three whole days he received the gratulations of a countless host of admirers. On the previous day the venerable ‘paint-king’ Duisberg and Gentleman of the Chamber von Oldenburg-Januschau, a typical old Prussian, on behalf of industry and agriculture respectively, had handed to him the title-deeds of the castle and estates of Neudeck, the seat of his family which had been purchased by subscription and entailed upon him and his successors.

The Chancellor presented him on behalf of the nation with the proceeds of the “Hindenburg fund,” which in accordance with his wishes was distributed among the war cripples and the bereaved. In the evening he attended a dinner as the guest of honour of his comrades of the old army at which Mackensen, looking slim and almost youthful in his

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hussar uniform in spite of his years, proposed the principal toast as the next senior marshal present.

The next event was a military serenade in the courtyard of the presidency. Two pyramids of scarlet gladioli had been erected, between which he stood in his military over-coat and listened while the bands played within the circle of light.

Early next morning some curious congratulators turned up at the back door; a baker's wife bringing a huge 'Brezel,' three small youngsters disguised as Indians a crossbow, and the newspaper boy a live rabbit!

The principal presents meanwhile had been exhibited in the hall, chief and most valuable among them a dinner service of five hundred pieces of blue-scale china from the Berlin factory after a design of Frederick the Great, the offering of the Government of the Reich. Prussia had presented him with a series of pictures of old Berlin painted on china. Bronzes, paintings, inlaid furniture and countless other presents testified to the national gratitude. The telegraph office was kept busy that day, for every one of the congratulatory telegrams he received was written out on hand-made paper with his crest on it. Even the mint issued coins that bore his effigy.

By a happy and symbolical coincidence harvest thanksgiving took place that day. Hindenburg attended the service in the modest round church of the Trinity where Schleiermacher had once preached. "He who sows in blessing shall reap in blessing" were the words chosen for the text of the sermon.

Then followed a very solemn reception at the Presidency which was attended by the highest officials of the Reich, the foreign diplomatists and the generals. Chancellor Marx made a speech appropriate to the occasion, and Hindenburg sent his best wishes to the unredeemed Rhineland. No

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greater happiness, he said, could possibly happen to him on his birthday than to see the liberation of the province which for so many years had been the storm-centre of world politics.

The leading literary celebrities of Germany, and of other countries as well, sent him respectful and affectionate messages : letter after letter arrived too from those quarters which two years previously had been most inexorably opposed to him.

A compilation entitled "What Hindenburg means to us" was published by his former electoral agent von Loebell, the first comprehensive character sketch of the President that had yet appeared.

Of the many newspaper articles which dealt with the event the following seems the most characteristic and therefore most worthy of reproduction : "Hindenburg's genius is not executive, but rather one of sheer humanity. His unique qualities are therefore expressed by his personality rather than by his accomplishments. Posterity can afford to disregard the artist who does not rise superior to his work, so at least Schiller tells us who lived in a strictly classical atmosphere. Hindenburg is a consummate artist in his attitude towards humanity, for he possesses the faculty of transforming the simplest spiritual emotions into forces of the unconscious. He was able to lose the greatest war in history and at the same time retain the affections and confidence of those who loved and trusted him unimpaired. His personality is in every way overpowering. And therefore it is essentially impossible to praise or to blame him. His administrative successes and failures are of no account in comparison with the general impression he leaves behind him."

During the afternoon of that Sunday in October, which was again favoured by 'Hindenburg weather,' the hero of

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this anniversary in the truest sense of the word drove in triumphal procession from the Wilhelmstrasse to the Grünwald along the same route but in a reverse sense to that followed by him upon his previous state-entry into Berlin. His destination was the sport stadium, the open-air amphitheatre outside the capital, where thousands of children dressed in white played their games and sang songs in celebration of peace and the future before him.

Once more the ovations of the masses accompanied the leader on his way home, but it was not merely the red, white and blacks who cheered him this time. The latter, from sheer force of habit, were perhaps still in the majority, but they could no longer monopolise him, however much they might feel inclined to do so, and even pretend that he was inevitably theirs. The old republicans, too, mindful of their processions on behalf of other leaders and another cause, still maintained a certain reserve as regards public demonstrations where various political colours were flaunted. Nevertheless, Hindenburg entered upon his eighty-first year with an enormous capital of patriotic prestige which within the next few years was to be appreciably increased as regards the Left and correspondingly diminished as regards the Right.

Later on in the month Herr Löbe, the socialist President of the Reichstag, unveiled the marble busts of Ebert and Hindenburg, which stand facing one another in their lofty niches on either side of the chamber. It was a ceremony arranged by the republicans to make amends as it were to the living. As Löbe, who had been his bitter enemy and had administered the Oath, admitted, "from the day of his accession to office he has acted as the representative of the whole nation and not as the spokesman of a party, and he has always raised his voice on behalf of conciliation and compromise."

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE TRIBUTE CONTROVERSY

"EXTEND the powers of the President" was the cry raised in the early spring of 1928. The nationalist orchestra took up the new melody and gave it a place in its programme, where its presence was doubly welcome on account of the contrast of its piano tones to the habitual fortissimo of the black, white and reds. The conservatives and the bourgeoisie were in a majority in the Reichstag before which Hindenburg had taken the Oath, and yet he was compelled to dissolve it. Its two predecessors which had succeeded the National Assembly had also failed to die a natural death. Both had been buried prematurely by Ebert, the second indeed in a great hurry in order to prevent further mischief. And now its successor was awaiting its sentence of death by Hindenburg. His decision coming when it did was a mere formality and anything but an unwelcome surprise, for the parties had gradually got thoroughly sick of the general ineffectiveness of the bourgeois block. The confused attempts to organise the educational system on a confessional basis in the name of culture had proved a complete failure.

German agriculture, moreover, in spite of the presence of representatives of agrarian circles in the Government, had advanced still further down the slippery slope of distress.

So now the parties which had hitherto occupied a position

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of responsibility as well as their confident opponents on the Left had all had enough of it. A whirlwind campaign in the constituencies, with its slogans and electoral pledges combined with a holiday from state affairs, seemed a welcome relief. None were apprehensive, some even hopeful, as to the result.

Shortly before the formal dissolution of a parliament, whose period of usefulness had so abruptly terminated, the President held his annual political reception. A very heterogeneous company it was that assembled at the presidency, public men, dignified civil servants, business men the mainstays of the party funds, labour deputies and young reporters from the Wilhelmstrasse, the political mentors of a generation whose hour had not yet come. Handed on by the ushers they each in turn shook hands with their aged host who, attired in his frock-coat, stood at the top of the brilliantly illuminated staircase which led to the reception rooms on the first floor, and then wandered informally, beer glasses and sandwiches in hand, through the ancient halls, and the more modern apartments of the palace.

One of the German Nationalist representatives approached his host and asked him the humorous but significant question, "Well, Mr. President, I suppose you are soon going to give us a holiday?" "Yes," Hindenburg replied half-jokingly, half-seriously, "as soon as you've done your work."

Accordingly for a short time the Reichstag worked under high pressure to liquidate the urgent and non-contentious business, the 'emergency programme' as it was termed. Then, at last, the deputies were free to go home for a short holiday or to become the victims of the popular displeasure.

"Vote for the German Nationalists if you are discontented," was the slogan invented by Hugenberg for the use of his supporters. Discontented with whom? Had they

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not been the strongest and most influential party in the Government ? Unfortunately it was all too obvious that the big Nationalist party of the Right had not made things easier for Germany either at home or abroad. The German Nationalists believed, or affected to believe, that the 'system' was responsible.

While the Christians and conservatives under Marx and Keudell had been painfully endeavouring to work together, they had taken up the study of political philosophy, an unwonted occupation for the champions of the opposition to the Republic and the new order. Other cultural philistines of nationalist views now came forward in Berlin and at other centres of political thought in the shape of professors of constitutional law, to give their academic interpretation of the doctrine.

In the country districts of Pomerania, East Prussia, Holstein and Mecklenburg the old clarion calls rang out : down with the November criminals, down with Stresemann and Briand, up with freedom from slavery, not another farthing for the foreigners who are plundering the nation, back to the spirit of Imperial Germany. The Republic had betrayed the cause of agriculture. It was all very well far away in the provinces, in villages, and country towns, where the ingenuous belief in the good old days still persisted in spite of innumerable disappointments. It was political catering for the multitude, a dish served up by popular kitchens for the consumption of the simple-minded.

The more intelligent members of the party, however, maintained that the fault was due to a miscalculation in the construction of the Reich. The President was their man. If he could only do as he liked he would send the democrats about their business and denounce the pacts of slavery. Then, according to the nationalist schoolmasters, the 'government of mediocrities' would be replaced by

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one composed of real German heroes. Extend the powers of the President. But what if Hindenburg was not immortal? What if one of his successors armed with extended powers were to share the beliefs of the 'mediocrities' and avow himself an adherent of the school of Weimar?

The main question, moreover: would Hindenburg give a free hand to the German Nationalists, still remained to be settled. He had already given several visible proofs to the contrary since his signature of the pacts of Locarno. Never mind: cheers for Hindenburg was not to be henceforth a merely conventional form of greeting, but a recognition of his sturdily patriotic action.

After all, he was the man of 1914, he would save them again and regain them paradise. Therefore he should be given the powers he needed. They would put up with the Republic, that is to say a Hindenburg republic for the time being. All that was needed was a short paragraph giving him full powers and authority, and an appeal to him as an officer to give his orders and see them carried out. Of course, to do that the Constitution would have to be slightly modified. But was the modification so slight after all? Hindenburg's ministers were not to be dismissed merely by a vote of the crowd in the Reichstag. That, however, was a very serious matter, for it would mean the end of democracy. Some of the more moderate Nationalists suggested that a ministry should only be turned out by a two-thirds majority or under other limitations.

Such reforms could only be carried under a democratic dispensation by means of an electoral campaign, unless they simply... but a *coup d'état* was too dangerous. So the hoardings were placarded with huge notices bearing the words "Extend the powers of the President." Other placards exhorting the electors to vote for the German

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Nationalists portrayed the President as a magic genius surveying the distracted throng of parliamentarians beneath him. Finally, to prevent any mistake, handbills were distributed bearing the words : "Whoever is in favour of Hindenburg must vote for the German Nationalists."

What did he feel about it all ? He refused to say anything. After all he could not prevent it unless he had those 'further powers.' But he expressed his disapproval in discreet fashion, and his remarks in private left his hearers in no doubt as to his annoyance. He would be much obliged if they would leave him out of their party manœuvres. He did not belong to any party, and what was more he was not going to. They must not expect him to look at things from the party standpoint. What had he said, they asked one another ? Mum's the word, anyhow. It mustn't get about. Hindenburg, after all, was their Roland, they would conquer with him some day if not that time.

In any case it was not to be just yet. In fact, the German Nationalists suffered rather a severe defeat. Instead of gaining seats, as they had always done since 1920, their numbers diminished by nearly a third. Hindenburg appointed a Social Democrat as Chancellor. It was clearly time for the patriots to be up and doing.

The constitutional philosophers were hard on the scent, and the Constitution was examined article by article. All that was needed, they decided, was to redraft a few of the provisions, and the President could appoint any ministry or 'directory' he liked. Pamphleteers adduced their ingenuous and ingenious arguments, jurists juggled with interpretations, historians looked up their constitutional precedents, ministerial responsibility was defined and re-defined again and again.

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But would the Reichstag lend itself to these proposals ? It was hopeless to expect it to do so. The idea of a two-thirds majority was equally impossible. The only other legal alternative was to appeal directly to the nation, to the feelings of the faithful admirers to whom Hindenburg owed his election, and who knew what was his due. Surely those who had elected him would not leave him in the lurch when he required a free hand to deliver Germany from the Marxians and other enemies of the Fatherland ?

It was all very ancient history, only the slogan 'more power' was new.

Was he himself anxious to be given dictatorial powers, it was asked. He ought to be, he must be, was the reply. The idea must be dinned into his ears. The outlook was doubtful at present, but then things would brighten up. All that was needed to stir up men's minds were a few demonstrations with banners, military marches and cheers, and the nation would wake up. Decidedly there was a slump in genuine German patriotism !

The 'Steel Helmets' at that moment happened to be on the lookout once more for an attractive cry. This huge association of veterans, which represented commonsense as well as folly, was compelled every now and then to launch out upon some startling adventure in order to electrify its hundred thousand members and induce them to believe that it was furthering the cause of progress, for the memorial celebrations and the time-honoured and emphatic protests which marked these proceedings were beginning to wear rather thin. As no really effective propaganda could be devised, there was nothing for it but to get up an ephemeral agitation on some insignificant and unworthy pretext. That in the long run is the tragic feature of all these reactionary associations and parties. Their unwillingness, nay their inability, consistently with

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the views they hold, to serve the cause of organic progress —for to do so would imply self-surrender on their part— compels them continually to act the part of a disturbing element in society in order to dispel the apathy of their followers, who then become intoxicated by the joy of combat and rally enthusiastically round the standard of their association.

The discovery of a new war-cry had become once more a matter of urgency for the 'Steel Helmets' in 1928. During the tenure of office by the Right this 'alliance of ex-service men' had arranged solemn processions to Berlin and other German capitals in order to effect the moral conquest of Germany. The object of these demonstrations was to foster the martial spirit of the nation, and to this extent they were not altogether reprehensible. The spectacle, however, of bands of amateur soldiers marching through the proletarian quarters of the capitals attended by an escort of republican police as a precaution against attack had, however, been the reverse of edifying. Their tattoos attracted the curious, but did not effect many conversions to the policy of militarism.

But now at last the Government was to be dealt a crushing blow, which would proclaim the 'Steel Helmets' to be the saviours of their country. Some theoretical talk of a referendum with regard to the extension of the presidential powers had reached the headquarters of the association. By jove, that was a good idea and well worth taking up ! Dictatorial powers for the president ! Besides, Hindenburg was one of their honorary members ; so let the cry be the Hindenburg State *versus* the Democratic State. They would rouse the nation and destroy the incompetent and dissolute democratic state that had been born of treachery. So a campaign of hate against the system of Weimar was set on foot. Constitutional reform was to be the undoing of

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the liberal constitution. Parliament was to be deprived of the supremacy which it had so long and so disastrously exercised.

In a fight like this, in which the referendum was to be used as a weapon, Hugenberg, his press and his money were indispensable. The latter, however, who was already almost omnipotent in his party, was averse to the enterprise on many grounds. In the first place constitutional questions were unpopular. A dictatorship which was initiated by a haggle about a paragraph could never become effective, and, moreover, Hugenberg had not yet got complete control of the German Nationalist party, at any rate to his liking. Too many of its members were still suffering from the compromise complex, too many still inclined to the *via media*. And perhaps, nay probably, he didn't really trust Hindenburg. Furthermore, the right wing of Stresemann's party was trying to take the wind out of the sails of the hotheads by bringing forward a vague proposal for the extension of the presidential powers.

He thought, therefore, that it would be better to drop it ! But he was already revolving in his imaginative but businesslike mind another and a better idea, namely a fight against the tribute. A world conference was to meet almost immediately, at which the German reparation payments were to be reduced, a circumstance which would afford him an unlimited prospect of agitation. We won't be exploited any more ! Down with slavery !

A fresh economic crisis had already begun to cast its shadow over Germany in the winter of 1928-29, when the international experts started bargaining about the German debts in Paris. Was the loss of a great war to entail upon us payments for two whole generations ? Europe was shivering in the grip of a terribly severe late winter. Unemployment was increasing and social unrest had raised

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its head. And as if to justify the Nationalists after the event, the Reichstag displayed a most lamentable irresolution. Public opinion turned against these ossified parties : people realised more vividly than ever before that the parties of 1919, though differently proportioned to their pre-war prototypes and under another disguise, no longer adequately satisfied the needs of so critical a period. Would not the distress in town and country inevitably help the cause of the Nationalist opposition ?

The opposition, however, let itself be carried away by its plans. It was all very well to persuade the national delegates to the financial conference at Paris to reject and decline unfair terms. They would have done so in any case. But it was quite another matter to start beating the old Wilhelminian drum at home once more, to which the world had definitely declined to listen, especially when Herr Schacht, who was negotiating on our behalf, instead of relying on his own proved abilities began dancing to the tune of the German Chauvinists.

The Young Plan which, after a long period of grievous labour, had at length seen the light of day, in spite of the relief it afforded still bore very severely upon Germany. Would she accept it ? The final decision rested with Hindenburg. He had a free hand, and could take a different line from the timorous majority of his fellow-citizens if he considered the disadvantages of the revised system of tribute to outweigh its advantages. But, in any case, the question of rejection and reversion to former conditions was one for him to decide.

In the summer Stresemann started upon his last great diplomatic tour. Again for several weeks the foreign policy of Germany trembled in the balance. The terms of the new plan were actually aggravated for Germany. The Rhineland, however, was to be freed, and that was a moral

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compensation for the heavy burdens imposed upon the present and the next generation, and Hindenburg congratulated Stresemann on his work of liberation. Nevertheless, the latter's enemies and the false friends of the President deemed that their hour had at last come.

The extremists hitherto had not been dangerous, for their ingenuous desire for Hindenburg's dictatorship had merely been the pursuit of a phantom. But it was very different now. Hugenberg actually went to the length of concluding an alliance with a political freebooter like Hitler. The 'Steel Helmets' came into the field with a proposal to take the popular vote on the question of a bill to prevent the enslavement of Germany. Anyone who gave further pledges to the victorious Powers on behalf of the Reich was to be sent to prison. Hindenburg, therefore, if he accepted the plan would spend the rest of his days as a convict.

Now, the wire-pullers of the campaign had never from the very outset intended that this crazy paragraph, for which the electors were being instructed to demand a referendum, was to be taken seriously. Accordingly, the Nationalist leaders admitted, as soon as it became evident that the more sensible majority of the nation was convulsed with indignation at the impudence of the plot, that it wasn't going to be as bad as all that, and that Hindenburg was not to imagine that it was directed against him. Nevertheless, in order to conciliate their noisy fellow-conspirators of the Swastika, the wording of the penal servitude paragraph remained unaltered. In spite of the disapproval expressed by the more moderate elements of the Right of the ridiculous terms in which the menace was couched, the strength of the delusion was so great that four million German citizens recorded their votes in favour of the initiative.

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The 'Steel Helmets', too, as might have been expected, completely lost their heads, played the game of soldiers harder than ever, and posed as the most formidable of Cheruscans. Alfred Hugenberg, indeed, had the nerve, in spite of the jeers of the public, to stand up dressed in the frock-coat of a privy councillor, in front of the monument of Hermann the liberator in the Teutoburger Wald, and vow to the Cheruscans by his spectacles, his notebook and his oak cudgel, that he would deliver Germany from the hirelings of the International. The brown-shirted Hitlerites and the 'Steel Helmets' in their *Windjacken* nerved themselves for civil war, the latter in spite of the fact that Hindenburg, whose monumental figure represented law and order in Germany, still figured as an honorary member of their association.

In the meantime he had sent for the leaders of the alliance and warned them. Herr Seldte, its founder and chief—a misguided but good-natured civilian leader and really decent-minded at heart—after a little shuffling promised to behave himself in the future. Nature had never intended him to be an arch intriguer, and moreover, honest citizen that he was, he would have preferred to keep his promise to the venerable President. But alas! he had been captured by the ex-officer diehards, the thousands of retired majors whose sole object in joining the 'Steel Helmets' had been to vent their childish fury on the republic.

It was a bitter experience for Hindenburg, the bitterest since the catastrophe of November eleven years previously. His stoop increased and his face turned ashen-grey. He went about with tightly compressed lips, as though he would avoid conversation. Who can tell what he felt in that honest heart of his or what were the workings of his shrewd but simple mind? Surely that duty took preced-

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ence of old friendships and associations. He was now faced for the first time by one of those tragic decisions which leadership entails. When the partisans of Imperial Germany had installed him somewhat ostentatiously in office he had regarded himself quite legitimately as the chosen guardian of his country. Since then they had criticised and irritated him by their behaviour, but he had not been unduly affected by it. The majority still cried out Hosanna to him, with the same fervour as they had cheered him during the war.

But now the very friends in whose patriotic beliefs he had been brought up had turned against him, and he was compelled to defend new and to him somewhat unfamiliar ideas, with which chance had brought him into contact in extreme old age and which were more or less antagonistic to the opinions he had held during seventy years of his very purposeful life. The Field Marshal bethought himself of the first steps in his active career. What was the principle upon which he had been reared ? It was the principle of duty.

Duty ? It was a word that was sadly out of fashion in 1929, a word that had been so abused in leading articles, proclamations, obituary notices and after-dinner speeches, that the younger generation had come to regard it merely as part of the politicians' stock-in-trade. To the Wilhelminians on the other hand it signified prestige and triumph, whereas the older generation, which had been brought up in an atmosphere of simplicity, realised that duty was a definite end in itself and a safeguard against selfishness and temptations.

Hindenburg might very plausibly have avoided the conflict between his duty and his inclinations. At the age of eighty-two he could have resigned office and withdrawn into dignified retirement. He would then have been spared

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this breach with the past and have appeared in the light of a patriarch, who made over the unfertile field of politics to sons who could not agree either with him or among themselves as to best method of cultivation.

But the sense of duty innate in this old man forbade him to do so. If the cry of 'No surrender,' though not unexpected on the part of a general in war-time, had been heroic, the fortitude with which he defended the uncongenial cause of political commonsense against the promptings of a misguided patriotism was reminiscent of the heroes of antiquity.

He, the most faithful of them all, had now to stand up to his former followers, his war comrades, his old friends, the elder generation of the bourgeoisie, the racist fighting men of the countryside, and the academic youth, and oppose the traditions and revolutionary aspirations of Imperialist Germany.

How could they be so blind as not to see that their abuse, however much it might affect him personally, could not alter the course of political events in the smallest degree?

Of course all these Nationalists who so hysterically preached the cause of 'liberty' fully realised that their campaign was doomed to failure. They were bent, however, on keeping the nerves of the public on edge and preventing Germany enjoying the period of calm that was necessary for reconstruction, and also on involving the head of the State in their degrading disputes. Their agitation in favour of a referendum compelled him to raise his voice on behalf of the honour of the Government, and when he did so they maliciously and spitefully attacked him for failing to display the impartiality he was bound to observe by virtue of his high office. Nay, they actually had the impudence to maintain that he was being made a tool of by his advisers.

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Addresses poured in exhorting him to consider the situation as a patriot. The referendum definitely proved, of course, that these super-patriots were in a hopeless minority, but Hugenberg was still too self-righteous to admit that he had been in the wrong.

Stresemann's death had put an end to his untiring labours in the cause of peace and international common-sense. Hindenburg accompanied to their last resting-place the remains of this doughty champion of the policy of what was feasible and inevitable, who had been called away ere his task was completed. Others would now have to carry on the work. "Perish Stresemann," the high priests of the diehards had cried. It now remained to complete the almost finished task of the dead statesman and convert Germany to the belief that her revival could only be effected by international co-operation, and heavy sacrifices in the way of material reparations, a policy which would never have held the field but for the active support and prestige of Hindenburg.

The final debates on the subject of the tribute bills were about to take place. Whatever points still remained doubtful had been cleared up at a second conference at the Hague. The alarming feature of the internal situation was not so much the urgent nature of the tasks which awaited the executive and the legislature as the conviction entertained by the advocates of the new plan that the burdens imposed upon us were too great to be borne indefinitely. They too felt that there was no moral justification for our condemnation to such protracted and intolerable slavery, and that the whole country resented being condemned to the lot of the vanquished for so many generations.

Nevertheless, in view of the factious nature of the opposition at home, they were bound to advocate the adoption of the legal solution at the earliest possible moment, and to

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regard it under the circumstances as the lesser of two evils. It was inexpressibly sad that they should have had to perform a duty to the State which was so liable to misinterpretation. For after all it was so very easy for their opponents to assume the appropriate tones and gestures and play the more heroic rôle.

Not all of those, however, who advocated the Utopian policy of resistance to our stern creditors were careerists, braggarts or beer-carousing students ; many of them debated and discussed the idea of defying the victorious Powers with the earnestness begotten of genuine courage or put forward arguments which if superficial had been conscientiously thought out. Even Hindenburg himself at heart could not help admitting the justice of their instinctive objections and cautious reservations.

The economic and social distress was not only obvious from the tone of public pronouncements, it was visible through the ugly cracks that were showing up round the German economic system. Money and employment were scarce, and there was a complete lack of confidence in the future. In the government parties and offices team-work proved either impossible or ineffective ; and so universal was the lack of courage and the anxiety to avoid the responsibility of imposing additional burdens that no party dared vote additional taxes. Some one suggested an emergency levy on the rich and those in assured situations and devoting the proceeds to the unemployed. Hindenburg was in favour of this course, but the true brand of patriotic citizens were against it. How was a nation whose sentiment of solidarity was so impaired to raise this huge tribute with which to repurchase its right of self-determination ? Beneath comedian-like grimaces lurked feelings of despair. How could it be otherwise ?

And yet there was one faint but doubtful chance of

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salvation, and one only. Germany must make the utmost sacrifices to purchase her liberty ; after all, the instalments and the final payments for the subsequent periods were not irrevocably fixed. The contingency of revision was provided for. The first essential for us was to show our enemies that though defeated we were strictly honest. The liquidation of a defeat is one of the most delicate of political operations.

Hindenburg sent for these dilatory tacticians. It had got to be, he said, and further delay was impossible. Let there be no attempt at underhanded compromise. What needed doing must be done at once. The Young Plan bill was given a third reading in the Reichstag. Once more the waves of nationalist entreaty beat against the presidency. Generals called, associations telegraphed, party cliques drafted petitions, and the extremist press once more brought all the resources of its eloquence to bear upon him. Germany had only one hope, and that was Hindenburg. The victor of Tannenberg could not dishonour himself by handing over their children and their children's children to slavery ! They pretended that Hindenburg had not made up his mind, in order to give freer rein to their indignation and disappointment on the morrow.

At this tragic juncture the President issued a manifesto to the nation in which in deeply-moving language he explained why he had subordinated his personal feelings to his duties as head of the State.

" In view of my responsibility for Germany and her future I could not bring myself not to sign. . . . Many of my correspondents, with the best of intentions no doubt, have requested me personally not to prejudice my historical reputation as the former Commander-in-Chief of the army by affixing my signature to this bill.

" To them I would reply : My life was spent in that great

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school of duty, the old army, where I learnt to do my duty to my country regardless of my own feelings. Personal considerations accordingly have had nothing whatever to do with my decision. The idea that I could avoid responsibility by means of a referendum or my resignation is one, therefore, which I could never possibly have entertained."

It was not the language usually employed in the official manifestoes which permanent officialdom draws up for its chiefs. It was expressive of the man and of his deep-rooted individuality. The abrupt ending of the sentences, the aptness and vigour of the phraseology, were all racy of the writer. The spiritual rhythm was obviously perceptible beneath the rough exterior, and behind this simple-minded soldier, who disdained to write for literary effect, the observant eye could discern the fantastic proportions of the superhuman destiny which had accompanied and guided Germany through so many of her vicissitudes.

Those who either could not see, or whose anger had rendered them incapable of vision, now fell upon the 'renegade Hindenburg.' Their press breathed lewd insults: "The suicidal attitude of a misguided portion of our nation is only paralleled in our history by that of the President." "He has to-day forfeited the unlimited confidence originally reposed in him by every genuinely patriotic German." "Respect has given way to hatred. It is henceforth to be war to the knife, a war in which there can be no retreat."

There was a trag-i-comic side too to these extravagances. "One almost feels a longing to be back once more in the battlefields of the Great War ; a longing to hunger and thirst, to bleed and die." How many deaths, we wonder, had this emotional scribbler already died ? As he had left the reality to others, he probably had never experienced the longing in person.

To appreciate Hindenburg's nobility of soul one has only

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to compare it with the spurious enthusiasm of his traducers. One of his contemporaries, a general who had fought very well and bravely under his orders in the east, was so led away by his feelings as to exclaim in public to his eternal discredit : " Unfortunately we have no Vehmgericht to put this signer out of the way." It was all very well to plead the senility of the author of this vindictive threat and the fact that he endeavoured subsequently to tone down his words ; the mischief caused by the original statement was done.

A dishonest movement of the 'youth' of the country was now set on foot. Students and schoolboys armed themselves for the campaign of hatred. " To-day," they cried, " we are going to burn the disgraceful treaties in every part of the country." And accordingly these half-grown lads, who after all were only apeing the gestures of their Nationalist elders, marched forth with black flags to the rendezvous of political immaturity, to burn printed copies of the treaties, and return home with a proud consciousness that their theatrical gesture had saved the country.

The more seriously-minded section of the Nationalist undergraduates had made their protest directly to Hindenburg in the name of the 'dead of Langemarck' and the volunteer regiments which had gone to their death in Flanders in 1914.

Very quietly, very gently, but very firmly, he put them in their places. He reminded them, moreover, that " the memory of the young volunteers who had sacrificed their lives for the Fatherland imposed upon their generation the special duty of making sacrifices in their turn in order to procure the liberation of German territory, and to enable their country by dint of hard work and harmonious co-operation to regain its former proud position in the world."

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That same day the ‘German Black, White and Red Banner’ launched its campaign against Hindenburg’s ‘policy of submission,’ “which, it asseverated, would consummate the process of national enslavement initiated by the Marxians.” The League promised its followers “that it would continue henceforth to oppose the man whom even the Jewish and Democratic press had proclaimed the saviour of the republic.”

Meanwhile, the National Socialists of Berlin had organised a monster demonstration against the President and the tribute bills at the headquarters of the Teachers’ Union. Hindenburg’s name was greeted with shouts of ‘Traitor! traitor!’ a cry that, notwithstanding the presence of numerous officers, was allowed to pass without protest. “That great fraud Hindenburg has collapsed,” sneered one of the platform speakers, a remark that was greeted with a volley of cheers and the shrill cry of “Not before he had been paid by the Sklareks and other profiteers for doing so.”

The new international treaties comprised an agreement with Poland, which was to put an end more or less to the formal legal disputes which had arisen out of the dismemberment of Eastern Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. Claims had to be abandoned on our part that were justifiable on both moral and legal grounds, in order to prevent the expulsion of German settlers from the ceded territory.

This advantage was to be purchased at the price of concessions on the part of the Federal Government, which many deputies of moderate views, not to mention the Nationalists, held to be altogether excessive. Hindenburg, as a native of the Ostmark and the former conqueror of the east, was peculiarly sensitive to the distress which had prevailed in his homeland since 1919. Before signing the bill to confirm the agreement with Poland that had been advocated with such poor arguments and passed by so

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small a majority, he had it submitted once more to the law officers of the Government for their opinion.

Even when all these legal doubts had been finally dispelled, he only signed this inconclusive document for the sake of peace and on condition that practical steps were immediately taken to relieve the inhabitants of our eastern provinces, whose position in consequence of their isolation and the sabotage of the frontier was becoming increasingly desperate.

The extremists of the Right at this point served up a new romance to their followers, the meanness of which was only equalled by its absurdity. They affirmed openly that in the course of the discussions in the Wilhelmstrasse on the subject of the Polish treaty Hindenburg had asked his secretary to hand him the text of the liquidation agreement as he wanted to read it, and that Meissner had replied that the treaty was drawn up in Polish only, which the President did not understand. Hindenburg, they said, had been apparently satisfied with his information, and after making this feeble attempt to govern had gone to sleep again. To make the story complete, the Jews or Jesuits should have been proved to be responsible for the absence of the German text. The Ludendorff of 1930 would then assuredly have swallowed it.

It was surely not so long ago that the Nationalists had impetuously demanded "an extension of the powers of the President of the Reich." In fact, only a year ago! Since then they had implored and finally threateningly summoned him to emasculate himself, and give way to a minority of agitators and obey the behests of Hitler and Hugenberg, or in other words to subordinate the interests of State, of which the nation had appointed him the guardian, to the passions of the irresponsible multitude.

Hindenburg's statesmanship, it will therefore be seen,

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has invariably been misunderstood by one side or the other. The Left had no sooner ceased looking upon him as a sort of German MacMahon, than the Right began to regard him as an apostate from the absolutist ideals of their fathers. Was it he that had changed, or was it the others that had forsaken their former beliefs ?

The duties of a responsible leader vary with the office he holds, and when Hindenburg entered upon the presidency he found a task awaiting him very different from that which faced the retired General on his appointment to the command of an army or the vanquished Commander-in-Chief in November 1918. The character of a self-reliant man who has reached maturity does not change ; such modifications as do occur in his views are caused by the situations in which he is placed and the instructions he receives and agrees to carry out.

The influence exercised by famous men on the history of their times resembles some mighty stream driving its channel through hill and vale, and the more formidable it is the more closely do their contemporaries scrutinise the course of their career. The humble individual who shuns publicity, and whose part is played on a very narrow stage, can plan the curve of his own life as he pleases and live unnoticed by any save his nearest and dearest, whereas every change of attitude on the part of those who loom large in the public eye is made the subject of congratulation or abuse.

When Nietzsche said that " Only those who change are permanently akin to me," he did not mean that the persons of strong individuality must necessarily depart from their original nature. Changed conditions bring about a change of views. Influences exterior to and independent of us alter our conceptions and prescribe new principles of action. The fact that Hindenburg was able to adapt himself to the

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changing course of history is decisive as to the estimate we must form of him.

Those who obstinately persist in the error of applying to modern problems the methods of former days are either mediocrities who leave no mark behind them, or mischief-makers, the merit of whose casual services are outweighed by the harm they do.

Hindenburg emerged neither as a fraud nor an apostate from the tribute crisis, which had originated quite naturally, but had been artificially fostered until it assumed enormous proportions. He had won a victory, but the struggle left its mark upon him. Great achievements take their toll of the human beings who perform them. Many of his old friends had deserted him, and the new ones were not altogether to his liking. He was faced by the prospect of having henceforth to do violence to his own inclinations. Disguise the fact as he might, it was none the less his duty to do so. It was the categorical imperative of his fellow-countryman Kant, a stringent moral law which can only be fulfilled in those who are really free. The leader who remains the slave of his past may control others ; he can never control himself.

Among those who had forfeited all their prestige and moral influence was the unhappy Erich Ludendorff, whose reputation had once equalled that of Hindenburg, but who now had gone hopelessly astray. He had just founded a ridiculous rag in Munich called *Ludendorff's Volkswarte*, in which he raved like a religious maniac about the 'supernational' powers and their sinister plans for the gradual strangling of Germany. Ludendorff had long since left the church and separated from his faithful wife whose commonsense had had such a restraining effect upon him, and was living with a female exponent of nature healing ; and the two were now writing and speaking against

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Christianity, Freemasons, Jews and Jesuits, and conducting a campaign on behalf of a new 'Generation of Light.'

On the 30th of 'the month of spring,' i.e. March, this paper published an article entitled "Herr Paul von Hindenburg, by General Erich Ludendorff." The article dealt in the main with high politics from the distorted point of view of the author; the insults, however, which it contained did more harm to the writer than to Hindenburg, and would have been inexcusable but for the mental condition of the former.

Hindenburg, as in duty bound, had assented to the tribute law just as he had undertaken many other most unwelcome duties. Let us see what the Ludendorff of 1930 had to say about it. "Field-Marshal von Hindenburg," he wrote, "under the old army regulations has forfeited the right to wear its field-grey uniform and to be buried in it." "Herr Paul von Hindenburg has destroyed the very thing he fought for as field marshal." The writer asserted that he had been induced in 1919 out of regard for the nation to misrepresent in his war memoirs the part played by Hindenburg. Hindenburg had enjoyed the 'good things of this world' too much to realise the distress of the nation. He had assented to everything and abetted the betrayal of the Emperor, the Army and the Empire; he was now entirely under the thumb of the 'supernational powers,' just as he had been formerly under that of Ludendorff, and that was why he had signed the pacts of robbery and servitude.

The 'supernational powers,' in addition to their other misdeeds, had deprived Ludendorff of the glory of being the sole victor of Tannenberg. A certain ex-captain Elze, who was now engaged in teaching military history at the Berlin High School, had written a book on the battle of Tannenberg in which, besides dealing with the subject

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very exhaustively, he informed the public of the fact which had long been a matter of historical knowledge, that Ludendorff had shown a lack of resolution during the action, and that the decisive nature of the victory had been due to Hindenburg's determination. Ludendorff now endeavoured to confute Elze's arguments by calling him a 'Lufton.' In order that his readers might be in no doubt as to his meaning Ludendorff informed them that "Luftons were the castrated, or occasionally the uncastrated, sons of freemasons, who are admitted as freemasons on attaining their 18th birthday." This specimen, by no means the worst of the effusions of the *Volkswarte*, proves, if proof were needed, the deteriorating effect of the leadership of the so-called 'Tannenberg League' upon Ludendorff. It is almost superfluous to refer to an article written from the same point of view by his fellow-pilgrim, Mathilde, whose favourite subject is the 'Jewish motor-car,' in which she exhorts her readers to jump out of this car in which Christianity is sitting. Those who jump out of the car just before the abyss is reached will be saved, and save Germany by doing so.

How had the unhappy Ludendorff become so degraded ? How could this intelligent General Staff Officer, this magnificent leader endowed as he was with all the typical advantages and drawbacks of his profession, have descended to depths where even madness lost its method ? Might not his almost superhuman achievements during the war have upset his mental balance, might not he be looked upon as a war-worn, tired-out veteran, and be treated with the respect due to a war-cripple ? So at least it was suggested by many of his well-wishers, and we should not be the last to condemn them for an attitude which does so much credit to their hearts.

Unfortunately for their theory it is refuted by the facts.

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During the first few years after the war Ludendorff was in full possession of his faculties, both as a thinker and a man of action, and still more fully convinced of the great public future which awaited him. His one idea since his inglorious supersession as war dictator had been that his country would one day need him. And for some years it had seemed that he would be needed, for the forces with which he was in sympathy were only too anxious to use or at any rate exploit him. But, as a matter of fact, they could have done without him. By some process which at the time seemed mysterious and undefinable to all of us, the nation realised that it needed Hindenburg, or rather that it would need him, and it accordingly for better or worse prepared for the inevitable.

History has the unpleasant habit, from the point of view of the onlooker, of only becoming intelligible at a subsequent stage and of not informing the actors betimes of the Hegelian principle that what is is best. Ludendorff's failure in his principal enterprises was simply a matter of predestination. As Frederick the Great, who did so much for the enlightenment of Prussia, would have put it, "He had no luck."

Ludendorff was unable to prevail against the disappointments which an evil fate had decreed were to be his lot. The initial successes of men of his stamp contribute towards their final undoing. He was not inferior to Foch to say the least of it in ability, courage and energy ; and yet he failed. After the war he still believed that his hour would come, a belief for which there might have been some justification had he been born some decades earlier. As it was he took up one hopeless cause after another, and each one proved equally unsuccessful. He has been termed a coward for having put on blue spectacles and fled to Sweden during the revolution, and a coward he certainly was not. He has

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been accused of folly for having co-operated secretly in the army conspiracy which led to the ridiculous Kapp Putsch, and he certainly was no fool. He has been branded a contemptible trifler for having taken part in the Hitler riots in Munich in 1923, whereas he was never more in earnest than when he assumed office as the Federal war minister of the revolutionaries.

It was a long time before that madcap Hitler learned to conduct his agitation in a legal manner, and when in the November of the inflation year he fired his pistol at the ceiling of the Bürgerbräu vaults, Ludendorff honestly took this buffoonery as the signal for an uprising against the oppressors of his country at home and abroad.

During his ensuing trial on a charge of high treason he pretended once more that he was not to blame and that he had merely come to their rescue as a soldier in order to help them to defeat the Reichswehr garrison of Munich. In spite of all that had passed between them the old Marshal did his best to excuse him.

"The conduct of my dear friend and assistant," he wrote while the trial was in progress, "was prompted solely by his burning and unselfish patriotism," a testimony that was eloquent of his greatness of soul and incidentally of no mean advantage to Ludendorff.

Thanks to evidence such as this Ludendorff was acquitted, but instead of being touched by so much indulgence and amending his conduct he involved himself still more deeply in unprofitable intrigues. He made unfounded accusations against the ex-Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, broke off relations with his fellow-generals and with nearly all of his former friends, published ill-natured remarks about his wife and books full of mystical and incendiary matter, and wrote tactless letters to Hindenburg, who, owing to his election in the meantime as President of the Reich, was

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compelled, in despair, to sever his connection with his former fellow-labourer.

When the tribute crisis of 1930 broke out Ludendorff pursued the controversy to a point where it became a public scandal . . . and there was nothing more to be done for him.

## CHAPTER XV

### DEMOCRACY AT THE CROSSROADS

THOSE who had not been radically cured of any inclination to regard politics as a subject of amusement, in that early spring of 1930, which was the reverse of the springtime of German hopes, referred to the Federal Government as 'Müllerism.' For nearly two years the Government had managed to survive. Chancellor Müller, who was at the head of it, was an honest tactician who had learnt from experience and administered his office in a spirit of earnestness which even his opponents were constrained to recognise.

He was one of those Socialist leaders who, during the revolutionary upheaval and the period of political reconstruction which followed, had fought courageously and vigorously for the future of Germany. While exercising his functions as People's Commissar and then as President of the Reich, Ebert had gathered round him a staff of able, steady and experienced politicians of the Left, thanks to whose energy and moderation the country had gradually emerged from chaos.

Their statesmanship, as it turned out, proved somewhat disappointing. Even Severing, the greatest discovery of all as an administrator, was obviously a worn-out man when it was confidently expected that he would do his best work for the Reich.

The rapid exhaustion of the generation of Social Demo-

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crats which witnessed the reconstruction of the Reich, was a strange and tragical circumstance. Their achievements while they were mainly responsible for the government were far in excess of the average German politician, as no unprejudiced observer can deny. Can it have been due to the extraordinary character of the times in which they lived ? Opinions as to the part played by ability and fatality in the process of building up public institutions are somewhat unreliable, especially in times of violent change.

Five years had gone by since the Social Democrats had last governed the Reich. Had they forgotten once more in the meantime that ministerial responsibility is often incompatible with the fulfilment of party pledges ? The lesson had been learned, it appeared, for the old socialist panaceas and demands were put into cold storage and no objection was raised to sharing the fare which the other guests at the Government table found acceptable.

In other words Chancellor Hermann Müller was going to govern as far as possible upon bourgeois principles. His programme only differed from those of his predecessors in being more insipid and colourless. During his first few weeks of office he had a nasty fence to take : a new planet had swum into the public ken, to wit a battleship. One party were anxious to use it in the Baltic against Poland, the other—including of course the Social Democrats—were anxious to bury it in the estimates.

Müller's approval of its construction was followed by a tremendous party outcry. Hindenburg and Groener, his Minister of Defence, insisted upon the renovation of the Fleet, and Müller had to submit to being told by his friends that he had been browbeaten by two old generals. In the lobbies it was rumoured that the ironclad was to be christened *Friedrich Ebert*, in order that the second might

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be called the *Hindenburg*. Were we returning to the old methods of Tirpitz, who had habitually used naval nomenclature as a means of stimulating the national willingness to vote money for the Fleet ?

It was only one of a number of rumours, some of which were so trivial that they could be put aside with a shrug of the shoulders. Mere surmise if you like, unfortunately there was too much of it. The appointed guardians of the nation and their lesser satellites revolved in a fog of uncertainty and retailed vague gossip. The Social Democrats intended, it was said, to anticipate the Nationalist scheme for a dictatorship by setting up an extremist government of their own. The old bogey of dictatorship once more raised its head, and years were to pass before it was finally allayed. Severing had only to make a speech in which he stressed socialist republican doctrines, and it was at once said that the minister was foreshadowing a violation of the Constitution.

Meanwhile Müller was becoming increasingly bourgeois in his attitude, in fact his one anxiety was not to frighten his brethren in the coalition. In short, it was felt on all sides that he was not governing ; but nobody could say definitely who was. During the summer and winter of 1928 Hindenburg remained very much in the background. The successive crises which arose settled themselves and there seemed to be no object in his intervening. It was the essence of what was called 'Müllerism.' The Chancellor acted as if all was quiet at home, and as if the occasional political storms were bound to be followed automatically by fine weather.

Stresemann was either ill in bed or taking the waters in a vain attempt to restore his health. Foreign affairs moreover were occupying his attention more exclusively than ever, for he was compelled, so far as was compatible with

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his bodily weakness, to bring his whole intellectual weight to bear on behalf of the cause of international peace that he had so much at heart.

In Paris everyone had gone crazy about a new pact of American origin which was to 'outlaw' war. This Kellogg treaty, which was really nothing more than a sop to public opinion, nevertheless gave Stresemann a much-wished-for opportunity of suggesting a reconsideration of our burdens. Just then unfortunately his health got worse and he was compelled to hand over the conduct of foreign affairs to Müller, and at the close of the year complete calm prevailed in the German political world.

The lower orders, however, were being undermined and embittered by a distress more severe than any yet experienced in Germany, that was due to the lack of work and of the means of subsistence. The unemployment figures rose and the insurance funds ceased to be self-supporting. The Reich was compelled to advance million after million, while the employers complained louder than ever of the burden of their existing contributions.

This compulsory idleness which was so much on the increase spread more and more during the next few years, until it became a menace to the social structure. The figures, appalling though they were, failed to reveal the full extent of the suffering entailed by this enforced abstention from work, for only a proportion of those who were deprived of their ordinary livelihood possessed insurance cards and were able to 'go stamping' as it was popularly called.

Many valuable hand and brain-workers who had taken risks all their lives, and had yet managed to make both ends meet, now found no market for their abilities. Apart from the proletariat reserves huge armies of former members of the middle classes were awaiting anxiously to be employed

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afresh in the general process of production and eagerly disputed each vacant situation with one another.

What was Müller's Government to do under the circumstances ? It took practically no action ; but what could it have done ? Was not the application of the Socialist theory of the right of all to work obviously indicated ? The Government, however, was not entirely Socialist in its composition, and the coach was also being pulled by the business party of hard and unsympathetic capitalists, who were less likely to give way than the men who had been red extremists in the past.

The decline of the boom was a staggering blow to the big capitalists. Their attitude among themselves, nevertheless, was all the more uncompromising. Give the masters a free hand, they maintained, and all would go well again. It was undoubtedly a principle which had been successfully asserted time and again in the past. The masters made great play with their experience. Reduce the social services and give us a chance, they said ; business would pay and food would again be available. Germany was becoming an almshouse for state pensioners whispered Herr Schacht, who in addition to drawing a salary of several hundred thousand marks a year had substantiated his claim to a pension from the public purse. Instead of telling the working classes to insure they advised them to "live dangerously, take risks, and pull through," a counsel which apparently they had no intention of following themselves.

At this point the economic controversy merged in the larger issue : were there still openings, it was asked, for the efficient in Germany as there were in America ? If so, they were becoming fewer day by day. The intelligentsia as well as the masses were becoming increasingly sceptical as to the efficacy of individualist and capitalist methods as

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a means of salvation. Opinion began to be divided by fresh lines of cleavage, for the old designations of Right and Left had come to mean so little.

Distrust of the ideas upon which the old social order was founded grew apace. The Müller Government tried to maintain its own equilibrium, as well as that of its budget, on the crest of the wave of party controversy. But how long would these manœuvres avail to prevent a fresh plunge into chaos ? After a time the strain became too great, and the prestige of the Government rapidly diminished. The Reichstag, moreover, owing to the lack of political leadership, was becoming more and more the laughing-stock of the country. It was a splendid opportunity for revolutionary intriguers and street heroes. Political filibusters thrive in bad times, like prickly plants in sandy soil. Swastika and Sovietstar started a campaign of competitive rowdyism, and bombs were thrown and windows broken in various parts of the country. The land was filled with hatred, and the hearts of the timorous failed them. What was all this going to lead to, they asked, and where would Germany be in a year's time if the lack of public confidence was to end in the paralysis of authority?

In order that nothing might be wanting to heighten the effect of this tragi-comedy, Hugenberg, the arch-reactionary, entered into a close alliance with the anti-capitalist leader Hitler. The changeling was christened 'Hitgenberg.' A satirical writer described the tenets of the new party as follows :

"I am a true German.

Anyway, up to now I've always voted German Nationalist,  
But that's all done with—you see I'm an Extremist now.

One must sympathise with the working man.

Bar the Communists I can't stand them—

Hugenberg was quite right the other day

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When he said 'the country must be governed  
on Anti-Marxian principles but  
not in opposition to the working classes.'

But he's too unreliable for me.

We Nationalists must now all hold together.

The Emperor William you ask ? What are you  
thinking about ! I've got beyond him long ago.

Besides we've got Auwi'n ! \*

Yes, at last we've got class union : Princes  
and Generals and Privy Councillors alongside of  
the working men. Thyssen and Kirdorf and their like  
are very interested in the question.

At last I hope things will get better.

As for the Bolshevik Thälmann, democracy  
and Otto Strassern, a hook on the jaw for them.

The Socialists will be too frightened to say a word.

And then a national dictatorship

just like Italy. Exactly so.

Believe me the working men realise it is  
all to their advantage.

The middle classes must be strengthened and we need  
a strong army, a surplus of exports, and the old flag,  
And a morally regenerated nation : just as Frick has done.  
Popular high schools and all that rubbish is superfluous.

Praying does more good.

Who are we, you ask ? We are all members of the  
Socialist Nationalist Labour Party of Germany.

My Aunt who lives in Pasewalk tells me

that the movement is advancing by leaps and bounds.

If only we can get some decent well known people  
to lead us the rest will soon follow.

And of course they will and we shall do  
splendidly and become a second Italy.

See if we don't. Au revoir. Cheers for Hitgenberg ! "

A satirical but terrifying exposure of the muddle-headedness of the Nationalists, and the manner in which the simpletons were got at by the pseudo-liberators.

\* The reference is to Prince August Wilhelm, the fourth son of the ex-Emperor [Tr.]

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Hugenberg's assault on the foreign policy of the Government was a failure, and the various Chauvinist parties which had combined to 'liberate' the country by denouncing the tribute gradually broke up ; but the Government derived no general advantage from its successes. The problem of taxation defied solution. The various interested sections of the community were in no doubt whatsoever as to the remedy ; but their remedy in every case was impossible. The producers and traders on the one hand excitedly demanded to be relieved of their burdens, while the organised unions of those who lived by the sale of their labour regarded any further increase in the cost of living as unbearable.

The Socialist minister Hilferding, a wise but weak-kneed theorist, was jettisoned. The intervention of Schacht, whose tendency to play the strong man at the wrong moment had become increasingly pronounced of late, only rendered the confusion worse confounded. Moldenhauer, the new Minister of Finance, and a member of the industrial wing of Stresemann's former party, exhausted every expedient that his economic skill suggested to him in order to discover a means of covering the deficit.

The unemployment insurance had gradually become a sieve of the Danaides. The assumptions upon which the Federal budget had been based were completely upset every few weeks, owing to the failure of the receipts to correspond with the estimates. Every fresh accession to the ranks of the unemployed diminished the yield of the tax upon wages. It was no use increasing the indirect taxes, for however promptly the duties were imposed upon beer, mineral water and matches, consumption fell off still more rapidly. When omnibus fares are raised, many who have previously travelled by them prefer to go on foot.

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Similarly, the only result of imposing further social burdens upon employers of labour was to compel them to rationalise still further and discharge another four thousand workmen and another hundred clerks. It was not only that their sales fell off in consequence of the shrinkage of the home market, the world market was so choked with goods that fewer orders reached them from abroad. Discount rates had fallen and money had become considerably cheaper, but owing to the feeling that no money was to be made by borrowing there was an entire lack of demand for credit.

It was obvious that capitalism as a principle had failed, but that the day of socialism on a large scale had not yet come.

Both in 1919 and 1924 drastic economic decisions had had to be made, and on both occasions capitalism had proved too strong for the socialist movement. Now, however, neither of the two great economic doctrines seemed wholly applicable. In critical times like these extremists are at a discount, and even the policy of compromise itself makes the highest demands on the courage of its advocates. Interested parties have to be curbed and measures adopted regardless of the unpopularity they may lead to. It is only when the former have been satisfactorily dealt with that the country can be governed at all, even if it be to the temporary disadvantage of one or another, and perhaps of all sections of the community.

'Müllerism' was not equal to this task, and when finally the Social Democrats laid a restraining hand upon their Chancellor in the midst of his somewhat purposeless activities the Government fell, and it was once more a case of Hindenburg to the rescue.

Although the relations between the President and the Nationalists had steadily deteriorated since the inception

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of the Hugenberg-Hitler campaign against 'Slavery,' the former had made a considerable advance in the meantime in the affections of the progressive bourgeoisie that had voted against him in 1925. The Democrats, who were worn out by party worries, also looked to him for salvation. About a dozen of Hugenberg's old party had also dribbled back one by one and sworn allegiance to the Republic.

The strongest personality in this little group was Deputy Treviranus, a former lieutenant-commander in the Imperial Navy and a thorough-going militarist, whose aim now was to rejuvenate the conservative party. Men professing similar views were to be found in all the other bourgeois parties, and this applies particularly to the ex-combatants, whose experience and common aversion for liberal and nationalist cant formed a bond of sympathy which transcended all party differences. These men formed a tremendous reservoir of energy and of undaunted and unexhausted will-power.

From this virgin soil was to spring the new Cabinet, which even before its appointment was called the 'Hindenburg Government.' It was presided over by Dr. Brüning, the young financial expert of the Centre party, who in his day had served as a machine-gunner on the western front. The leading personality in this cabinet of ex-soldiers, however, was the Right file-leader Treviranus : as the political punsters said, "Müllerism" had been succeeded by "Trevirement."

What would be the attitude of the majority of the Reichstag ? Would it support these trusted servants of the President as it was constitutionally bound to do ? No one could tell. A mere chance, perhaps a few votes, would decide the issue. But what would Hindenburg and his delegates do if the Reichstag declined to play up, if the two or three popular representatives, who were of such

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numerical importance, were seized with a fit of genuine or political nose-bleeding when the division bell rang ?

Hugenberg's followers, of course, would have nothing to do with the men or the measures, with Hindenburg or Brüning, and above all with Treviranus, whom they regarded with the aversion peculiar to ex-political allies. Revolt, however, was spreading among the rank and file of the old German Nationalist party, the more moderate-minded of whom were preparing for secession. The Brünning Government thought it could split Hugenberg's party. The latter had challenged Hindenburg, so they would only have themselves to blame if the old strategist inflicted upon them a political Cannæ. He could bide his time ; operations were usually preceded by a concentration of forces.

Knuckle under to the Reichstag indeed ! The idea never even occurred to these political ex-servicemen.

The rumour of Hindenburg's secret instructions, authorising them to dissolve the Reichstag, which were said to be contained in a red portfolio, was quite sufficient to keep their opponents at bay for the present. The red portfolio, as a matter of fact, only existed in imagination, for the ministerial brown leather despatch boxes which lay upon the ministerial table contained as a rule only unimportant documents.

Nevertheless Hindenburg had undoubtedly empowered his Chancellor to send the five hundred to the right-about if they insisted upon it. Perhaps Brüning had got the authority in his pocket-book, perhaps it was lying in his writing-table drawer. But unquestionably it would be available if he wanted it. The Reichstag was saved once more by its evil conscience.

Brüning at once set to work : the Social Democrats meanwhile adopted an attitude of expectant hostility, for their

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electors were only too well aware that the late Government had muddled instead of governing. Brüning meant to govern, and had been given full rope to do so. Ruling in this case meant that he was at last going to fulfil the elementary political and parliamentary duty of balancing the budget. After all, the right of assenting to public expenditure and taxation is the corner-stone of modern democracy. What was the use of a popular chamber if it obstinately refused to avail itself of its rights, which were no less sacred because they were duties ?

The creeping paralysis of parliamentarism which had led to congestion in the constitutional life in the majority of the countries of Europe had developed into arthritis in Germany. A third Minister of Finance now appeared on the scene, for party timidity and the deficit had brought down his predecessor. He had tried with Hindenburg's approval to impose an emergency tax upon those in receipt of permanent salaries, as being the least exposed to economic risks. But the officials and clerical employees, the latter at any rate not unjustifiably, made themselves just as nasty when their purses were attacked as the organised sections of the community. The German bourgeoisie of recent years had gradually degenerated into a clerical army, in which security of salary was becoming more and more problematical.

In short, this Government of ex-combatants was unable to drill the interested parties by the ordinary words of command, so they left Hindenburg to deal with them. There was one signal, however, which they would have to obey when the Fatherland was faced by a crisis, namely paragraph 48 of the Constitution, however little of a clarion call there was about it. A dull business it seemed, too, some question of constitutional red-tape.

So insistent, however, was the press that the general

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public began to prick up its ears. Even the fruitseller at the street-corner pricked up his ears at last. "Forty-eight, that was when there was a revolution." Well, the dictatorial paragraph wasn't exactly the same thing as a revolution, but from the legal point of view the matter was not altogether unequivocal.

What had the Weimar Constitution to say about it? "If public order and security are endangered within the Reich, the President of the Reich may take all necessary steps for their restoration, intervening if need be with the aid of the armed forces."

It sounded very autocratic, there was no denying it! It was followed, however, immediately by a democratic restriction which provided that "the measures to be taken are to be withdrawn upon the demand of the Reichstag."

This dictatorial spell accordingly could very easily be deprived of its magic effect, for it could only be exercised with the approval of those who were to submit to it. None of the old moth-eaten parties had sufficient strength of character to disavow their interested camp-followers. There were too many old screws in the ranks of the traditional bourgeoisie, who were only too ready to submit to violence and stand still while they were being bridled. They could always avoid any responsibility as regards their electors by saying that Hindenburg had done it.

This vigorous and efficient young government, although of bourgeois origin, did not unfortunately represent the average characteristics of the class from which it was drawn. The latter were to be found in the main body of the deputies, whose marches and counter-marches and hesitations only too plainly reflected the inconsistency, the narrow-minded quarrelsome ness and the unintelligently-wicked selfishness of a degenerate class.

The younger generation, it is true, possessed sufficient

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courage and commonsense to pursue fresh objectives. But the elderly cliques, as was only pathologically natural, kept their juniors at arm's length. The latter, who were so loudly demanding admission, fondly hoped that this would be the last Reichstag to be constituted on such old-fashioned lines, and deemed no method of showing their contempt for this gang too bad, even if it involved the transfer of their party allegiance to the extreme Left or Right.

Curious alliances were formed as the dissolution approached. Hitler joined forces with Moscow, and Hugenberg with the Social Democrats, in order to combat the President. Since all four groups were working against the President, Hindenburg's first attempt to govern by means of paragraph 48 was bound to fail unless the Almighty enlightened the majority of the discontented followers of Hugenberg before the polling-day.

The Budget had ceased to be an issue. The passing of the essential Finance Bills had given so much trouble and anxiety that any provisional solution would have been accepted. But other issues were involved. A constitutional abscess which ought to have been treated long since had to be lanced if the new Reich were to survive.

The year 1930 was to bring about a change or usher in a new era. Everyone felt instinctively that the years between 1918 and 1930 would one day be looked upon as a definite era in German history. Whether the 'revirement' of national forces would be a 'Trevirement' or as was punningly suggested in view of the *coup d'état* of the 'little Napoleon' a 'Brunaire,' no one could even pretend to foresee. The mass of the bourgeoisie, however, were carried along by the millstream, and sooner or later a change would have to be.

The call to action to the youth of the country had origi-

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nated with a man of eighty-two in connection with fiscal decrees, a subject which can hardly be said to have appealed to their constructive instincts. Why should the constitutionally-minded youth of the country have rallied round Hindenburg and accepted him as their leader? Was it another of the many miracles which had signalled his long career? No, it was one of the most natural things in the world. Men in the thirties rarely if ever establish contact with those who are twenty years their elder and are still absorbed by their avocations. Youth must either consort with its like or else fall back upon older men, who have learned the lesson of experience and are still able to march with the times.

The generation which now so ardently advocated a new concentration of the bourgeoisie on the Hindenburg line was not composed entirely of the youths who had cheered the Marshal in 1918 and the President of the Reich in 1925. Many indeed of the latter had stuck to Hugenberg, but the majority had gone over to Hitler. On the other hand Hindenburg was now actively supported by all the more progressive elements who looked upon Liberalism as a term devoid of meaning and refused any longer to pay it lip-service.

This constitutionally-minded generation had recovered its sense of authority and obligation. Its aim was to avert by means of international action an international calamity, namely the impotence of parliamentarism, a misfortune from which Germany was not the only sufferer.

But Germany as a preliminary had very naturally to solve a purely domestic problem. The President of the Reich had discovered a new method of treating the disease. The dictatorial paragraph had been resorted to again and again during the last ten years as a means of unravelling complications that had not been always of a trivial nature. It

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was only owing to the tension of the general situation in 1930 that the inevitability of the process was recognised of which the fiscal decree was the purely external manifestation.

It seemed then as if President von Hindenburg was to be entrusted with the further mission of paving the way for the victory of the nationally-minded youth of the country over obdurate and uncompromising democracy. Anything like a *coup d'état* was absolutely out of the question in this connection. Hindenburg's young militants were opposed to anything that savoured of a Putsch. But there were legal if somewhat drastic methods of achieving the patients' cure. If the Reichstag persisted in declining to fulfil its vitally important tasks it would have to be dissolved again and again, until it learned the lesson that its formal sovereignty was incompatible with the neglect of its obvious duties. It was true that it was illegal under the Constitution to dissolve the Reichstag twice for the same cause; but parliamentary inefficiency was due to many causes none of which in themselves were sufficiently trifling to be regarded as mere pretexts.

Such were the ideas of the men who during that stormy political midsummer of 1930 sought to scrap old-fashioned institutions and forge new ones in their place. Alas! they were unduly sanguine. An organic change of the kind they contemplated takes years to accomplish. Anyhow a commencement had to be made and Hindenburg again was obviously the best man to inaugurate it. Would he be there to guide them when the heights were reached? The journey was longer than the enthusiasts realised and human beings are not immortal.

In addition to the hostile party groups on either wing, Hindenburg was opposed by the *littérateurs* of both extremist parties whose influence upon contemporary politics

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was due less to their political skill than the irresponsible nature of their criticisms. Although entirely lacking in constructive ideas as regards both the present and the future their absurd comments will enable the reader to form some idea of the prevailing confusion.

Let us hear first of all what one of the chief of these carping critics of Hindenburg, and the author of a pamphlet entitled *The Great Old Nonentity*, had to say about him.

"The blind worship of Hindenburg," he wrote, "is one of the most unfortunate happenings of recent years. Everyone who has the slightest claim to be well informed is aware of the absolute incompetency of the President, but nobody has the courage to say that the retention of such a political illiterate in that position is impracticable in the long run, and is bound to lead to the most dangerous complications. The unwholesome attachment of the German nation to defeated generals renders the mischief almost irreparable. When Georges Clemenceau was asked on the eve of a presidential election whom he was going to vote for, he answered with the cynical frankness that distinguished him, 'For the biggest fool.' Heads of republics have often been elected on this principle, and it may have been advisable occasionally to choose peaceable, pompous and decorative nonentities rather than restless and unreliable leaders with autocratic tendencies. There can be no objection to such a course provided the nonentity in question bears constantly in mind the reason of his elevation and does not become the object of a popular superstition which ascribes to him mystical powers or approves everything indiscriminately that his chief clerk submits to him for his signature.

"If Herr von Hindenburg were a strong, purposeful and independent political reactionary with opinions and a will of his own, the problem would be considerably simplified.

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But our President is almost entirely devoid of individuality, in fact he is nothing more than a glorified marionette, that is pulled this way and that by irresponsible fingers, an idealised cipher, who is worth a fortune to his followers, a dummy in whose name and on whose behalf his servants act and claim and are granted authority because, they allege, it would be impious to refuse it to him."

The mocker who displayed his disintegrating ability with such skill was answered by an unperverted youth who up till then had never been a follower of Hindenburg, in the following terms :

" You may think and, if you feel inclined, say what you like about the personality and the ability of our President and express your opinions in whatever fashion you think seemly. But you cannot run down the constitutional head of a state in this way. I do not demand respect for gods who are only men after all. But to express oneself as you have done about an aged and deserving man, who is doing his duty to the best of his ability, is more than disreputable, and something of which an educated and intelligent man like yourself should be thoroughly ashamed. ' The Great Nonentity ' will smile when he reads your sagacious comments. . . .

" If Hindenburg were a strong, purposeful and independent political reactionary the problem would be considerably simplified, for he would simply muzzle you and your like, my dear Sir ! In that case Hindenburg would fulfil all our requirements and a parliament would be superfluous."

Hindenburg's detractor replied in vitriolic language. " Pull your nightcap," he wrote, " and the Weimar cockade well over your ears, and have a good sound sleep. The dictatorship will give you a rude awakening."

The skirmish was not merely a clash between malice and

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honesty but was complicated by another of those bootless controversies as to the significance of our past and future. Parliament and the dictatorship represented the two axles of the chariot of state. Democracy propelled the one, and authoritative leadership the other. If the parliamentary wheel ceased to work or worked in a contrary direction, the wheel of responsibility and duty was bound to revolve more vigorously than ever, a fact that was obvious to the disillusioned writer whose defence of Hindenburg was inspired rather by disgust at the latter's traducer than by any active sympathy with him.

The satirist who throws scorn on every kind of constructive idea eventually puts the very carpers on their defence, and accordingly the criticisms uttered by the gossips outside parliament and their lack of constructiveness, which exceeded even that of the most hardened party politicians, gradually compelled those who had no sympathy with Hindenburg to join forces with him.

An impudent wagster who had no particular liking either for Hindenburg or the Constitution of Weimar wrote some lines poking fun at the 'broad back' of the paternal old gentleman : his poem nevertheless contained a grudging confession of a heartening but at the same time undoubtedly unpleasant truth.

" And when the wicked foe comes they all  
Creep at once behind this broad shouldered old man,  
And look on in security while the fight goes on,  
And thank God that no harm can happen to them.

We want to work and carry on our business quietly.  
Who will give us the victory the country asks ?  
There still remains an old general,  
The last hope of the republic."

The last hope of to-day, however, was not destined to be the vain regret of the morrow. The country was better

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than its Reichstag, which was still, though surely it would not be for ever, elected under an impossibly bureaucratic and impersonal system.

Who would give us the victory ? Was Hindenburg our last resource ? Stresemann had had successors, but the heir to his political abilities had still to be discovered. Hindenburg too was a peculiar phenomenon, but he was also Germany's good genius, of that there could be no question. His successor would probably be a very different man and of course would have grown up in very different surroundings. Nevertheless the tradition of German faithfulness to duty would be maintained.

Hindenburg had put an end to a Reichstag which could not make up its mind whether to live or die, and the honourable but narrow-minded House was closed for repairs. It was quite an ordinary proceeding, but the general election that followed was anything but so.

A majority that disagreed on every point save on a policy of negation had voted against Hindenburg for doing his duty to the State and against his decrees. A majority of that kind was imbecility personified, so there was nothing for it but to dismiss it. It was not a question of a *coup d'état* or of forcible measures, but an attempt to save the situation upon genuinely democratic lines by leaving it to democracy to decide whether it would live and prosper or perish. In the latter event Hindenburg still remained and behind him was the nation, which was in a perpetual state of rejuvenation.

The general election of the 14th of September showed that the process of rejuvenation had not yet reached the childlike but only the childish stage, and that certain sections of the nation were in an even more advanced state of senility than had been suspected. The renovation for all its thoroughness was a failure. The Hindenburg spirit

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had succumbed at the polling-booths, and national democracy had been defeated by the extremist parties who repudiated the existing institutions. The anticipations of those who had hoped to see the Hindenburg state working under constitutional conditions were disappointed for the present.

The only thing to do was to have patience. Hindenburg had remained patient under much worse circumstances, and had become a master in the art of waiting. The 107 Swastikists in the new Reichstag would have to wait for their 'third Empire,' indeed they would never live to see it. The democratic crisis of 1930 was a crisis of convalescence, and not a death-agony. The German national state possessed the will to live and would survive, whereas the Wilhelminian empire had signed its own death-warrant.

## CHAPTER XVI

### LIBERATION

A GREAT stream of water, swirling through flat pasture-land, yellow-grey in the foreground and turning faintly blue in the receding distance ; such is the Vistula, the artery of the east on which the weal and woe of so much territory depends. The fertile countryside looked beautiful in its early summer garb. What a happy country this would be, if the nations could only agree to make up their differences and enjoy the gifts of nature in peace and quietness ! The stream instead of uniting had become a frontier, an impassable gulf that divided two nations who, fate had decreed, were to live alongside of one another, and yet be doomed to perpetual antagonism. Every road that led to the river was barred by a Polish barrier. Only the eye and, above all, the imagination were free to rove along the other bank.

Here, looking down upon the eastern river, stood the towering figure of an old man. He was bareheaded, and as he stood there a warm current of air came down the valley and gently ruffled his white hair. Hindenburg, for it was he who stood there motionless as a watch-tower, seemed absorbed in profound meditation. What thoughts one wonders were passing behind that brow of granite as he looked on the land of his ancestors.

More than five hundred years ago his forefathers had crossed the rapids on their way to the east, where they

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had founded, lost and regained their German home. Behind him lay the ancestral seat which had been intended by his great-grandfather as the home of the family, whose prouder walls rebuilt by the great-grandson proclaimed the rise of a race whose name had now become one of the most illustrious in the world. He himself had played his part, and his land, his family seat and property of Neudeck, the erstwhile gift of the Crown, had survived the bad times, for his grateful and affectionate fellow-countrymen had presented him his old home complete in every detail.

But how could he rejoice in view of the anxiety which weighed so heavily upon the German east, and paralysed agriculture and every other kind of initiative ? The ties which united the Reich with East Prussia were severed. Was it merely the corridor, or had Eastern Germany suffered wounds that no territorial readjustment could cure ?

The soil no longer nourished the hands that tilled it. The crisis in Eastern Germany, it is true, was not only due to the unfairness with which the frontier had been drawn. In that part of the world the landowners, both great and small, grew corn and potatoes or bred horses and swine, and none of these could be sold at profitable prices : moreover, it took these men time to adapt themselves to the new demand.

As the estates became more involved, the burden of interest became more and more unbearable. Instead of protecting property the minions of law and order were doing their best to take it away from those who, by the sweat of their brow and by dint of hard toil in their fields and on the farm, had pulled themselves and their numerous families through.

Hindenburg, come and help us ! It was he who had

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promoted the emergency programme of assistance for the east by his unceasing exertions and exhortations, it was he who had speeded up the relief, it was he who again and again had harried the Reichstag, and finally when Parliament had proved recalcitrant had taken the initiative into his own hands and had issued the necessary decree. He had even taken a leading part in the campaign of propaganda on behalf of ryebread, which even had it succeeded could not really have done very much good. Placards bearing his name were hung in every baker's shop. Eat ryebread, it said, that fine German bread which Hindenburg had eaten ever since his youth, and to which he owes his good health. His appeal, however, was not very effective ; as the sceptical townsmen remarked, he had canvassed them on behalf of war bread and war loan, and both had turned out badly. The fact is the town dweller was incapable of realising the distress in the agricultural east—the daily round was worry enough, and why should he be bothered with questions of national solidarity ?

As Hindenburg felt the pulse of the workers on the land weakening, his thoughts and conversation turned more and more to the relief work which had encountered so many real and unnecessary obstacles. His feelings at receiving the following letter from an East Prussian Deputy may well be imagined. “ At the very time, Mr. President, that you are doing your utmost to help East Prussian agriculture in its distress and preserve it from utter ruin, lorry-loads of armed policemen are scouring the province daily and carrying out forced sales of farm property on behalf of the moneylenders. In spite of all their industry, a cruel fatality has compelled their owners to have recourse to the moneylenders, who are now drawing the noose about them. Many farmers have had to leave the farms of their ancestors with their

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staffs in their hands, and thousands more are threatened by a similar fate."

Would he, the writer went on, set at liberty the farmers who were in prison, excellent fellows, good Germans and ex-soldiers all of them, and put a stop to these terrible forced sales ? And Hindenburg did his utmost, though not as much as he could have wished ; at any rate, by his orders financial relief was provided in the worst cases and the merciless process of execution was stayed. But would the various beneficial measures which still remained to be applied really be of any permanent use ? Could the *enclave* be saved by purely domestic legislation ?

One evil produced another. The grant of a subsidy of many millions by an impoverished country could not alone restore this isolated district to its former prosperity : the distress was too deeply rooted to be cured by the consumption of half a loaf of ryebread by every German daily. The naturally steady influence of territorial continuity and the moral tonic of confidence were both absent. Polish pressure robbed the district of its vitality, and the artificial demarcation of the frontier, besides destroying the topographical unity of the district, paralysed the optimistic energy and the spirit of enterprise so necessary both to the directing and the wage-earning classes.

What story did the stream tell to the old knight and protector of the east and of the Reich as it flowed by him ? What pictures of a dim and distant future did the far horizon conjure up ? What developments were to be expected in the near future if the hopes of the Fatherland were to be fulfilled ? The choice of the right moment, too, was of the utmost importance. Would everything turn out peacefully and for the best ?

He was well aware of the sanguinary history of the country. Had not the blood of the Beneckendorffs and

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Hindenburg's blood had been shed in its defence, and had not he himself led the last and mightiest of the armies which had driven out and conquered the Slavs ? And yet they had not been kept out. War had not put an end to the age-long quarrel. Might not the commonsense of the pacifists effect that which the sword had been unable to accomplish ? Yes, if everyone was prepared to play his part ; but that was not the case ; they would not learn. The easiness of the conquests had turned Poland's head, and her covetousness had been scarcely appeased by the huge extent of her acquisitions ; but let her beware of imagining that a settlement imposed by force could permanently endure. That was the feeling common to every race-conscious German, and how could he, the most faithful of them all, think otherwise ?

Hindenburg's unostentatious sojourn on the banks of the Vistula had attracted universal attention, and a storm of rage broke out in Warsaw and Paris. What was the old man doing there, what secret designs was this old general harbouring ? Of course, he was inspecting the *points d'appui* that had been secretly prepared for the war in the east, or seeing how the fortifications were progressing, or preparing his plans for an offensive operation on the ground. Hindenburg across the eastern frontier ! Tannenberg had not been forgotten, and it was fear that had prompted these mendacious rumours.

It was no secret even among the world conquerors of 1919 that the treaty between Germany and Poland needed reconsideration ; visionary projects were evolved, statesmen and writers formulated plans or supported the German demand for revision. Mussolini described the *status quo* as an absurdity, and unfair and unbearable for the German nation, while English Liberals advocated the revision of the treaty on the basis of an arbitration agreement, and

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even in France voices were raised in favour of Germany. One writer proposed to create a corridor across the corridor. The Reich was to be given a strip of territory along its main railway line. Others were anxious to neutralise our former province of West Prussia and hand it over to the League of Nations.

In Poland, however, nobody was allowed to advocate a compromise which would have altered the frontier by even one yard. The Polish jingoes even went so far as to demand the cession of half of East Prussia. Nobody in Germany was deceived by the suggested half-measures of the international schemers, for it was well known that the mediators shrank from proposing radical solutions, which alone would be effective. It was not a question of a square mile here or there, but of an entirely new economic system for the east, which would take account of traffic, national minorities, and their right of settlement, their culture, and their constitutional life. A solution was needed of a far bolder nature than any of which worn-out old Europe was as yet capable of devising. Even Hindenburg could not discover it, and nobody else in Germany had as yet propounded a feasible plan ; for merely to demand the restoration of the *status quo ante* was to ignore the gravity and the scale of the problem. Affairs in the east, however, were beginning to move, and the only thing to do was to wait in patience and go on waiting.

While Hindenburg was standing bareheaded on the banks of the Vistula, with the boundless sky above him and the prison bars of the frontier before him, absorbed in contemplation of the problems of the future, the victorious invaders in the west were preparing to take their departure. By the end of June 1930 the last detachment of French troops would have crossed the western frontier, and the sun of German sovereignty would have once more risen

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over a liberated Rhine. And Hindenburg was coming to the western artery of Germanism, which like the Vistula, was not the frontier of Germany, to share in the joy of the inhabitants of the Rhineland.

Thus the east and the west were united in a common experience. Here in the Ostmark, everything was still uncertain, and no definite objective had even been outlined, and ideas, desires and beliefs struggled confusedly for the mastery. In the west, on the other hand, a considerable step had been taken towards the recovery of our liberty. In the west we could joyfully resume possession of the territory that had been restored to us, whereas on the east not even a stone of the barrier had been loosened. Now, however, that a friendly understanding had been reached with France by dint of sacrifices and perseverance, it had become more than ever the imperative duty of the German nation to realise its obligations in the east. The very fact that the pressure had been removed on the west conferred upon the east an additional claim to be given a fresh start.

The line described by his life lay between east and west. It was to the west that the cadet from East Prussia had marched to gain his adjutancy and be present at the fall of Paris. It was to the east beyond the Vistula that he had gone as a general to fight the first battle of liberation near his home, and it was there that he had acquired his first renown. But it was in the west once more at Spa that he had learnt to face disaster, and again in the east at Kolberg that he had held the frontier against the Bolsheviks.

His first 'progress of liberation' after his election had taken place in the west in the Ruhr, and had been followed by his profession of faith at the Tannenberg memorial. And now he had come once more to encourage the silent sufferers in this far-away corner of the country by his helpful

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advice and solicitude before taking part in the festivities, which at the same time were a solemn reminder of what still remained to be consummated. Where were the fellow-wayfarers who had accompanied him on these long historic excursions ? The older generation whom he had known in his youth has long since disappeared, and many of the younger generation, too, had passed away. Ludendorff had gone to the bad, Stresemann was dead, and there he stood alone exposed to the influences of east and west, in the grip of ever-new emergencies, grappling with fresh and more serious tasks as soon as the one in hand was accomplished.

The castle of Neudeck, which lies at the extremity of the Reich beyond the Polish barrier, now became for several weeks the scene of political decisions of the utmost importance, for the negotiations as to the various political and parliamentary measures to be adopted took place over the wire between it and Berlin. It was impossible for Hindenburg to leave for the Rhine until a serious programme of work had been devised and democracy had been protected against itself. The President, however, had given full powers to the Chancellor, and was therefore enabled to avoid cutting short his summer holiday.

Upon his arrival in the Wilhelmstrasse on his way through Berlin he found a typically German quarrel awaiting him. The 'Steel Helmets' had taken part in some field exercises in the course of the previous year and as a concession to French nervousness had been suppressed by the Prussian Government in the Rhineland and Westphalia in consequence. Unfortunately, the Prussian Prime Minister, Braun, had not yet decided whether or not to rescind the prohibition and accordingly this great organisation of the Right was debarred from approaching the President during his 'progress of liberation.'

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In spite of the fact that the ‘ Steel Helmets ’ had given the President a great deal of trouble, he at once demanded that they should be given the required permission, and when he found that his request was unavailing and that Braun was insisting upon an apology from the association, he wrote the Premier one of his stiffest and most unambiguous letters. He was not going to the Rhineland, he wrote ; for it was not right to prevent a section of the people taking part in the rejoicings of the whole Nation. Many people in Berlin pulled a very long face, for Hindenburg had never before intervened so forcibly in party quarrels. He gained his point, as under the circumstance he was bound to do. That doughty Prussian champion Braun had to call his minions off, the ‘ Steel Helmets ’ obtained the required permission, and Hindenburg got ready to make his ceremonial visit to the Prussian Rhine.

His impartiality and the determination with which he had enforced his will was incidentally of great tactical value, for it enabled many politicians with conservative leanings to abandon the Catiline conspiracy and join the ‘ Hindenburg line.’ This ‘ Hindenburg line ’ of German commonsense extended from the Marienburg to the cathedral of Speyer, a curve symbolical of the course of German history.

“ For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday, seeing that the time is past as a watch in the night,” was the text of the sermon preached by Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich on the occasion of the liberation of the Palatinate. The country, he said, was one of the oldest centres of European civilisation. Roman altars, urns of forgotten German tribes, arms of the Merovingians, silver plate that had been hidden during the Thirty Years’ War, ruins of buildings burnt by Mélac’s dragoons, all testified to its illustrious past. Where could be a more striking example of the

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mastery of mind over huge masses of masonry be found than this old Imperial Cathedral, whose cupola was modelled on that of Hagia Sophia ?

It was here on the Sunday that the long procession of mitred dignitaries bearing their croziers passed up the central nave to the strains of Bruckner's *Te Deum*, the first event of a week of ceremonies and rejoicings. Pontifical high mass was celebrated with every circumstance of liturgical and secular pomp, for the church was filled with a forest of banners. The loud-speaker, in ecclesiastical language the '*promuntiatur*', conveyed the voices of the celebrants and the choir to the congregation and the assembled faithful outside. "A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday." The procession was followed by prayers and the national anthem.

And then began a display of exuberance that was typical of the Palatinate. Sleek, beribboned horses advanced drawing bulky casks behind them. A cooper's apprentice drew the spigot and poured the good wine into the stone drinking-fountain outside the cathedral, whereupon the liberated masses with many a laugh and joke pressed forward to fill their glasses. More reminiscent still of the middle ages was the requiem mass for the Emperors next day. A mass for the ancient regents of the Holy Roman Empire. Beneath the church colossal candles had been placed beside the vault stones and the roof of the crypt sparkled in the flickering light. The Cardinal attended by ten bishops descended the steps, and the republican police presented arms. Suddenly the breathless silence was broken by the Imperial bell in the Cathedral tower. Three times in succession it boomed, as if to convey to the Palatinate and all who heard it the assurance that Germany could never die. *Et incarnatus est!*

"A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday."

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The inhabitants of the Palatinate were watching and waiting for Hindenburg to arrive and conclude this sabbath week of holiday upon a more modern note. Imperial romance, the *una sancta* of bygone civilisation, was to be set off by the appearance of a later-day hero, himself the scion of a lordly race and the elected representative of a citizen democracy.

Hindenburg had come from the east, from the country which the old Holy Empire of the Germans had opened up in its day. As he entered the porch of the cathedral, grey and rough-hewn as a statue, he was met by the statues of eight German Emperors—and how painfully familiar it sounds to us—and their rivals. The presidential procession, as Rudolf von Habsburg before it, had started from Gemersheim. Hindenburg looked meditatively at the tombstone of the first Habsburg upon which lay a faded wreath presented by Austrian officers on their retreat from France in 1918. In vain had Marshal Hindenburg kept Nibelung faith in the east: the glory of the Habsburgs had departed.

What resonant echoes of ancient and recent history were stirred by this place! Here the remains of Conrad II, the founder of this cathedral in his Imperial Palatinate, had reposed till the mercenaries of Louis XIV scattered them to the winds. The barking French machine-guns had now gone the same way as Mélac's dragoons. The bishop reminded the President that prayers had been offered in this cathedral for nine hundred years for the unity and peace of the Reich. Hindenburg replied that now that the worst was over, they must all work together for the good of the new Reich. *Ora et labora* was his motto, which perhaps may be translated as 'Concentrate mentally and work while you may.'

As he passed through the serried ranks of standard-

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bearers on leaving the cathedral, he saw, standing there—  
incredible though it might seem—the nationalist Colonel  
von Xylander of Munich, the most bitter opponent of the re-  
public and the friend of Hitler, and beside him the President  
of the Bavarian Royalist Society, with his *Camelots du roi*.  
They too, obeying a sudden prompting, had decided to pay  
their homage to this head of the Reich, who had come from  
the Berlin quagmire. Their action was somewhat irregular,  
for even the arch-Bavarian Premier, who rejoiced in the name  
of Held, set little enough store by these gentlemen who had  
given him so much trouble. Nevertheless it was a grateful  
and consoling symptom that they should look upon  
Hindenburg as the representative of national unity and  
should wish to associate themselves with a purely patriotic  
German ceremony.

The transition to the more immediate political present  
was effected by the ceremony at the town hall of Speyer,  
which also acted as a reminder of the patriot, whose ability  
had paved the way for this happy hour. Curtius, Stresemann's pupil, who now administered the office of the late  
minister and liberator, greeted Hindenburg on behalf of  
the new Reich. The many cases of treachery, rebellion,  
and, we must add, misguided vengeance, were all too  
present in the minds of his audience to allow of their in-  
dulging in an unduly festive mood.

Taciturn Herr Curtius was admonitory, reproachful and  
optimistic in turns. "Do not," he said, "let us mar this  
elevating spectacle of the staunch endurance and resolution  
of the men and women of the Palatinate and the Rhine by  
dwelling on the behaviour of those who did not fall into  
line with the inhabitants when the Fatherland was in  
danger. I ask you for the sake of our national dignity not  
to condescend to notice them, and to refrain from com-  
mitting acts of lawless violence which cannot but be

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injurious to our prestige." He then referred to Stresemann, whose name had not been mentioned in the proclamation issued on the day fixed for the evacuation in which the Government had expressed its thanks to all those who had contributed to the work of national liberation. "How I wish that he were here to address you in my stead, and to associate himself with you in your joy! How often in conversation did he picture to his friends, and more often still to himself no doubt, this happy scene which he always looked upon as the crowning achievement of his life's work."

Then came a conciliatory reference to the victors: had not the French in their day after the withdrawal of the German army of occupation praised the Germans for honourably fulfilling their pledges! "For our own credit's sake let us admit and recognise that the promise given by the statesmen at the Hague Conference has been kept. How often in days gone by have we heard it said in despair that the army of occupation would never leave the Rhineland. Those who told these pessimists never to despair were right after all."

Hindenburg expressed his thanks above all to those who "had kept unbroken faith with their country, and had done their duty in spite of imprisonment and banishment from hearth and home," and also to those who had withstood the intimidation and the temptations of the foreigner.

The procession then proceeded on its way through the countryside of the Palatinate, not mounted on white mail-clad horses as in the days of the Holy Roman Empire, but carried by swift motor cars. Past strife, the recent distress and the economic disturbances that threatened them in consequence of the long separation from the Fatherland, all were forgotten, and 'Steel Helmets' and Reichsbanner men, nationalists, socialists, the liberal bourgeoisie and clerically-minded peasants, for once mingled amicably together.

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Past vineyards and wheatfields they drove and along country roads, where cartloads of holiday-makers shouted and waved to them. At Neustadt-an-der-Hardt where the sun, the joy of the vineyards, broke through, children with blue and white flags crowded round Hindenburg's car, trying to catch every word that fell from his kindly old lips.

The castle of Hambach to the left over yonder recalled the early days of democracy, for it was there that in 1832, nearly a hundred years ago, the black, red and gold banner had been borne for the first time in procession as the emblem of unity. That flag which was now but a piece of faded silk and frayed gold embroidery had withstood the ravages of time, and when Hindenburg returned home to take part in the liberation ceremonies in the Reichstag, he would find the tribune draped with the flag of Hambach, to remind as well as to greet him.

The fortress of Hambach for the moment was surrounded by a sea of black, red and gold banners, colours which even in Hindenburg's father's days were accounted infamous ; even the black, white and red had been rather hard for the young subaltern to stomach, and now the erstwhile symbol of a political revolution had become once more the sign of unity.

His subsequent route, as some joker very rightly remarked, lay along 'the wine list,' through Ruppertsberg, Forst, Deidesheim. As he passed through the narrow streets of the latter place villagers leant out and offered him samples of the young wine of 1929. After the lovely wine country came the factories : Ludwigshafen with its grey workshops and working-class quarters, where the red flag was held in honour. Hindenburg, however, had ere now made his peace with the reds, and only the ultra-reds refused to have anything to say to him, and, after all, the east, to which he and they looked, was a very different one.

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At Ludwigshafen Hindenburg went on board the Rhine steamer that had been christened after him. After a short journey down-stream they reached Worms, famous in the history of Luther and the scene of the decisive event of Protestantism, the Lutheran ideas and reforming tendencies of whose inhabitants afforded a striking contrast to the Catholic mediævalism of Speyer. Here he was met by a host of Hessian state officials, clad in shining top-hats. The tea gardens on the river banks were filled by a surging throng of gaily-attired holiday-makers—guns were fired and airmen flew round the ship, which bore the presidential standard at the masthead. Then came the vineyards again. Oppenheim, Nierstein, and last of all Mayence, the one-time capital of a spiritual electorate, ‘golden Mayence,’ which was almost hidden beneath a mass of red, white and gold bunting.

Only four weeks ago it had been the French G.H.Q., and foreign judges had sat in the courts and sentenced men to prison under an alien code. The way to the grand ducal castle was lined with black, white and red bannermen, among whom Hörsing, who had once led the republicans against Hindenburg, was by no means the least enthusiastic. Hindenburg took up his abode in the castle where the French Commanders-in-Chief had so long resided beneath the shadow of the tricolour, and the square eagle-centred standard waved proudly in the breeze as if to proclaim that Germany was free once more.

Sunday from an early hour was one long carnival in honour of Hindenburg. Catholic though it was, the President's faith was given precedence on this occasion, and the day began with a solemn service at the Evangelical Church, at which the General Superintendent preached. He then drove through the town, whose crowded streets were filled with an enthusiastic throng, to unveil the first

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memorial in honour of the evacuation—the figure of a woman awakened from a deep slumber and turning towards the sun—that had been erected by order of the State of Hesse.

The procession ended at the town hall, which was crammed to overflowing by a throng of many thousands. The Chancellor began a speech which, both in tone and substance, far transcended an ordinary address of thanks. In tones of deep emotion he asked his audience the momentous question: of what use was the liberation of the Rhine unless it were supplemented by national unity? For public spirit—he clearly hinted without actually saying so—still left much to be desired.

And that, indeed, was the sad thought at the back of the minds of many of those who contemplated all this pomp and ceremony; next week Herr von Xylander and Herr Hörsing would call one another criminals, and to the right and left of them men would be found fighting as political brigands. It was this feeling that suddenly brought home to Hindenburg his spiritual kinship with the dead statesman, who to the last had been faithful to his belief and his motto ‘Nevertheless.’

Speaking in low tones, which revealed more than his words could express, he began as follows. “In common with you all I deplore the fact that the man whose name is indissolubly connected with the endeavour to achieve the liberation of the Rhineland by means of sacrifices and of a policy of agreement—I refer to Gustav Stresemann—is no longer here to receive from the living the tribute of their thanks. At this hour our minds revert to the man who to the last hour of his life struggled so zealously and patriotically to fulfil his self-appointed task of liberating the Rhineland to which he sacrificed his life.”

Self-appointed task! Had Hindenburg forgotten the first summer months of his presidency, when he failed as

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yet to comprehend Stresemann's attempt to outflank the league of foes by which Germany was then confronted; when he put Stresemann on a level with Erzberger, who had by this time ceased to be the object to the same extent of the hatred of the German Nationalists, a hatred, for which the man with whom he and Ludendorff had invented the legend of the murderous 'stab in the back,' Helfferich to wit, had been responsible?

What had become of them all since then? Stresemann in those days had been an enthusiastic advocate of 'popular imperialism,' and Hindenburg had hoped (and stated so in his recollections) that the German Imperial Crown would emerge some day like a rock "out of the perpetually stormy sea of national life." And now Hindenburg had made his peace with the Hambachers, and Stresemann, the champion of the cause of peace who had triumphed over the French policy of violence, had been carried to his grave with the black, red and gold eagle banner on his coffin. Of course, Hindenburg did not appreciate the contrast as clearly as we have stated it, for he was of too homogeneous a character to wish to probe the causes of his unavoidable breaches with his past, and realising as he did to the full the unity of his nature, he invariably at once turned the conversation if anyone attempted to recall bygone dramatic rifts in his past career.

The triumphal progress down the Rhine had ended, and he stood on the threshold of Prussia. Prussian of the Prussians though he was he had not originally intended to go there: Braun's dislike for the 'Steel Helmets' had, as we know, irritated him, and the Government of the Reich, moreover, in the interest of national unity had been successfully harrying Hugenberg. Now, however, that the tactical object of dividing the *fronde* against the Reich had been successful, and he had got over his annoyance

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at the uncrowned king of Prussia, he was willing to go there.

There were very good reasons for his visiting Prussia last of all. Twice he had paid visits to Prussia after the evacuation of the territory, once to Essen and Düsseldorf, and once to the Cologne fair. This time it was the turn of the Rheingau, the romantic 'show' district of the Rhine, and also of the arch-Prussian Ehrenbreitstein: and after that he would ascend the saucy Moselle to the dark *porta nigra* of Treves.

In Hesse and the Palatine there had prevailed an atmosphere of feudalism, by which the people, the landscape and the culture all seemed infected, and the feelings of exaltation were tempered by the tradition of a thousand years of Empire. In Prussia, on the other hand, modern industrialism and its concomitants, big business, the spirit of enterprise, broad asphalt roads and stone palaces, riches and class warfare, took precedence. The honeysuckle on the river bank and the keeps on the river heights were all very well as pleasant relics of the past and oases of poetry—but the Germania above the Niederwald expressed far more accurately the prevailing pioneer and Wilhelminian spirit. Round Coblenz the spirit was, if possible, more practical still: for there the industrial state was staking out its claims on the future, and kindness was at a discount, although money and goods changed hands at a far more rapid rate.

The pretence of unity in this quarter was far more transparent, but, on the other hand, local controversy acted as a stimulant to the creative faculties. This can scarcely be said to apply to politics, where the effect was rather to cause excitement and bad blood. The communists looked forward to the subversion of a society so fundamentally divided against itself. The Hitlerites had

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just imported their new and very effective brooms, and had started a campaign of provocation against Hindenburg, whom they attacked for going about arm-in-arm with Otto Braun, the 'super-boss of the socialists.'

And yet, when all was said and done, the joy of the populace was so great that an overwhelming majority remained faithful to Hindenburg and Stresemann. The celebrations were held beneath the equestrian statue of William I. In the distance the Moselle, which had long since become the German Mosel, fell into the German Rhine, and hard by in the courtyard of the hill fort of Ehrenbreitstein the children were singing their songs of German welcome. Hindenburg, the 'old Master' of the day, stood once more before his 'old Master.' As a young general he had been present at the unveiling of the monument when the Empire was at the apogee of its might and glory. It was at Coblenz in 1914, too, that the die had been cast which had affected his own fate so strangely: it was on the sidings over there that the special train had been marshalled which had come to take him to the east.

Night came down upon the river and the fields, and Hindenburg retired to rest in the train which was to house him for the remainder of his peaceful progress. To-morrow early he would go to Treves, the most distant of the old electoral cities. The cheering crowds gradually dispersed in various directions. And then as the lights were extinguished disaster crept nearer: a slender bridge across an arm of the Moselle collapsed, and in a moment those who had been so lately celebrating their liberation were struggling in the water for their lives, not all, alas! successfully. As morning broke a cloud of gloom settled down upon the afflicted town.

The sad news was brought to Hindenburg in his train while the citizens were putting out their bunting. Without

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a moment's hesitation he cancelled the ceremonies : flags were hoisted half-mast not only in the liberated territory, but all over Germany, and all differences were sunk in the presence of death. Hindenburg addressed the inhabitants once more from the platform of the town hall that had been hung with crape, not as their leader nor as a popular hero, but as a fellow-man and consoler. And then he returned home to an atmosphere of work and reality.

Had inscrutable Providence meant it as a warning ? Do not rejoice prematurely, and stake all your hopes on the success of one German enterprise ! What had been attained ? A great deal no doubt ; the just reward of endeavour and the happiness of the inhabitants of the Rhine-land were factors by no means to be despised. A beautiful country had been liberated. But others still awaited liberation, the Germans on the Saar to begin with. And even in the Rhine valley German sovereignty was not as unconditional as a truly free nation had the right to demand. The Treaty of Versailles was still in force, and the east was still writhing in its fell embrace. Liberation was the one absorbing thought of Hindenburg, and many more beside him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hindenburg once before had stood for Germany, but when she took him again as her symbol she took him for ever to her heart. The nation regarded his glory as the visible expression of its qualities. Even German humanity is not perfect ; it is a mixture of light and shadow.

Glory is the present of the unknown giver, but the fellow-creatures of the recipient must beware of idolising him. They must not carry their veneration so far as to forget that even imperishable renown cannot prevail against human imperfection.

Hindenburg's principles and character are of far greater

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moment than any success he may have achieved. Good genius of Germany though he was, he sometimes, nay frequently, failed to save her from her misfortunes.

The nation has set him upon a pinnacle of fame, a fame that is not altogether due to his actual merits. The victory which gave rise to his fame gave rise also to the legend that he was always to be depended on in time of trouble. And fame such as this comes from celestial regions which are beyond the human ken.

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दुर्गसाह मन्दिरनगर जारकेरी  
मनीनीताल

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